Workers and Intellectuals

NGOs, Trade Unions and the Indonesian Labour Movement

MICHELE FORD

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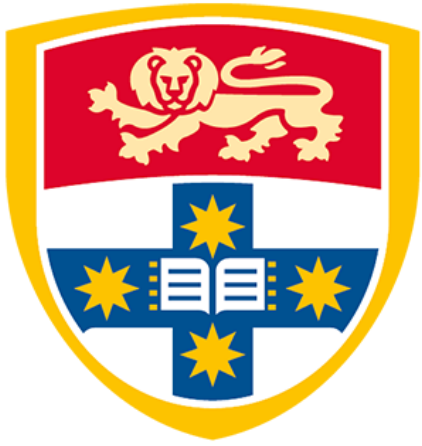

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WORKERS AND INTELLECTUALS

NGOs, Trade Unions and the Indonesian Labour Movement

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Michele Ford

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For Indonesia's labour activists

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Previously Published Work

Earlier versions of some sections of this book have been published elsewhere. Drafts of parts of the Introduction and Chapter Four were published in Ford (2003c; 2006c). Summaries and some of the details of Indonesian labour history and the developments of post-Suharto unionism, dealt with in more depth in this book in Chapters One, Two, Three and Seven, appear in Ford (2000a; 2000b; 2007). I am grateful to the respective copyright holders for allowing me to reproduce this material here. The substance of several chapters has also been presented at academic conferences in Australia and elsewhere.

Introduction

Late one Saturday, a meeting was held in an industrial suburb of Greater Jakarta. Over 400 women and a handful of men had crammed into a small rented building. They were workers from an export garment factory producing leisurewear for a well-known multinational corporation, gathered after finishing their shift. The crowd sat patiently in the stifling humidity, waiting for the small group standing to one side of the hall to address them. Some members of that group had arrived earlier by car and were a little better dressed than the shop stewards with whom they spoke. After a short while, the visitors stepped back and the shop stewards (mostly men) began to address the assembled workers, reminding them of the events leading up to the meeting. They explained that their company had been sold and the new owners had asked workers to sign change-of-status forms before the old company formally ceased to operate. Workers in some sections of the factory had been forced to sign the forms immediately. Others were permitted to take them home and study them first. By signing the forms, the workers recognised the new owners as their employers and accepted a number of changes in the terms and conditions of their employment.

The shop stewards reported to the meeting that many of their colleagues had been unhappy about the disparities in their treatment and about the proposed changes in their working conditions. They explained that a strike had been held a few days before the meeting and that trade union representatives had met with management and officials from the Department of Manpower to discuss their concerns. At that meeting, management had given the workers until the following Monday to present a formal statement of their demands. In the meantime the company had continued to implement changes to the company structure and workers' representatives had been visited in their homes by thugs sent by the company to 'encourage' them not to make trouble.

A low, angry mutter spread through the building, forcing the organisers to call the meeting to order. After an extended discussion, those present voted to accept the revised statement of demands proposed by the shop stewards. In a second vote, the workers agreed to stage another strike if the new company owners did not accede to their demands by the close of business the following Monday. The visitors were then asked to address the meeting. Although they had worked intensively with the shop stewards days earlier to decide on the wording of the demands, they limited their speeches to words of encouragement to the strikers and their leaders. They congratulated the crowd on the advances they had made since establishing a plant union and spoke about how much easier it was for workers to organise since President Suharto fell from power in 1998. The meeting closed with a rousing rendition of a ballad about workers' struggles for their rights.

When the workers streamed out of the meeting hall, a small group remained behind with the meeting organisers and the visitors to plan their negotiation strategies. They met again on the following Monday, when the shop stewards sought out the activists who had attended the meeting as visitors two days before. Negotiations with management had failed and the workers had again gone on strike. One of the activists, a lawyer, sat down with the group and asked what had happened. Together they analysed the flaws in the trade unionists' attempts to negotiate. According to the trade unionists, management had tricked them into wasting time on small issues and confused them by accepting their demand that workers continue to be employed by the old company. The lawyer first explained that they could avoid being deceived again if one worker acted as an observer. She went on to describe strategies that could be used to redirect the negotiations if management strayed from the issues at hand, also suggesting that the trade unionists keep notes during meetings and ask company representatives to sign those notes so they could not later deny what they had said. The group then performed role-plays of different negotiation scenarios. Three days later, the trade unionists again met with the lawyer for advice. The strike was not yet over. Over several hours, they worked through all that had happened since they last met and again revised their negotiation strategy.

These events were by no means extraordinary. Plant-level union organisers around the world consult labour activists from outside the factory for advice about strategy and tactics. What was different about this situation was the status and affiliations of the outsiders consulted.

In most countries, shop stewards rely on support from the branch or national level of the trade union to which they belong. Under Suharto's New Order, however, plant-level unionists had little, if any, support from the one trade union officially allowed to represent workers.[1] As a result, many workers instead called on activists from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for help.

NGOs are organisations more readily associated with the distribution of development aid, human rights and concerns such as the environment, identity and feminism than with factory workers. Yet in New Order Indonesia these non-worker, non-union organisations endeavoured to represent the concerns of factory workers using techniques acquired through international NGO networks and with funds from overseas donors. Indonesia's first labour NGOs were established by disaffected trade unionists between 1973 and 1985 in response to the New Order's radical restructuring of organised labour. By 1991, they were a significant force in all the main industrial cities of Java and Sumatra. Some of these NGOs were involved in research and policy work that did not directly involve workers but made an important contribution to the promotion of labour rights through national-level campaigns and collaborative initiatives with international NGOs and human rights groups. Others concentrated on grassroots organising and worker education, some sponsoring informal worker groups that later registered as trade unions after the fall of Suharto.

The role of labour NGOs as the principal advocate for workers' rights during this period seemed to allow NGO activists and workers to step beyond the constraints of traditional trade unionism. The relationship between NGOs, trade unions and workers was, however, inherently ambiguous. Although NGO support for labour was widely acknowledged, labour NGOs did not fit in the regime's narrow, union-focused definitions of the labour movement. Instead they were characterised as institutional 'outside intellectuals' that were at best partial and temporary substitutes for 'true' trade unions organised by workers for workers. These ideas about the purpose, form and composition of organised labour influenced the status and actions of labour NGOs both in the late New Order period and after Indonesia returned to democracy in the late 1990s. The story of the relationship between NGOs, industrial workers, trade unions and the state in Indonesia between 1973 and 2008 is thus a story about ideas and the effects of those ideas on the practices of organised labour.

The definitions that have shaped scholars' and activists' understandings of the contribution made by NGOs to the reconstruction of the Indonesian labour movement derived from historically determined international paradigms of labour representation and the national politics of organised labour. Richard Hyman's concept of a 'criteria of significance' offers us a useful way to explore this lineage. Hyman argues that factual accounts of industrial relations rest on implicit or explicit criteria of significance upon which scholars judge what is worthy of inclusion in those studies (Hyman, 1994: 167). When scholars and activists impose their criteria of significance on the institution of 'organised labour', they most often define trade unions as their object of knowledge. By definition, this object excludes labour NGOs and other non-traditional forms of labour organisation and limits our ability to recognise and theorise them. The implications of this privileging of trade unions are evident in Vedi Hadiz' seminal work on the labour movement under Suharto's New Order. Hadiz argues that as NGOs' involvement in the labour movement was a product of an authoritarian industrial relations system, they would necessarily become redundant with the advent of independent trade unionism (Hadiz, 1997). By using the trade union as the criterion of significance against which Indonesia's labour NGOs are judged, Hadiz thus excludes them from serious consideration, instead narrowly defining 'new' forms of labour activism to mean non-state controlled grassroots worker organisations that have the potential to develop into independent unions (Hadiz, 2001: 118–20).

During the New Order, most labour NGO activists indeed accepted that trade unions were the sole legitimate form of labour movement organisation and that non-worker intellectuals were necessarily outsiders. Developments in the first decade of post-authoritarian Indonesia, however, did not bear out Hadiz' predictions. As the initial euphoria of Indonesia's new independent unions subsided, it became obvious to many trade unionists that they could still benefit from the conceptual and practical support that NGOs are well suited to provide. In the decade after the *Reformasi* (Reform) movement forced Suharto to resign, a core group of NGO activists succeeded in redefining their roles as researchers, trainers and advocates, roles recognised and valued by parts of the international labour movement as well as by many local trade unionists.[2] In the process these NGOs carved out a sustained and continuing role for themselves in the labour movement and in doing so challenged dominant trade union-only definitions of the labour movement.

Locating the Labour NGO

Indonesia's labour NGOs were part of a surge in non-traditional forms of labour activism both internationally and within developing countries. There is nothing new about non-union organisations showing concern for the plight of exploited workers in the colonies or their post-colonial successor states. Before the contraction of Western trade union interests to the 'core business' of wages and working conditions after World War II, trade unions also recognised the interconnectedness between labour and other social issues such as the environment, human rights and gender (Gallin, 2000). What is new about contemporary labour activism is the vibrancy of non-union labour advocacy and funding networks, their structural independence from the trade union movement and their influence in developing countries. This vibrancy is documented in empirical studies of labour NGO activity conducted in several countries, including a number of Latin American states (for example, Armbruster-Sandoval, 1999; Williams, 1999).

In the developing world, NGOs have addressed work as part of the overall life experience of workers, a strategy that has enabled them to organise groups considered 'unorganisable' by trade unions, such as overseas labour migrants, domestic and child labour, people employed in the informal sector and outworkers (Ford, 2004b). However, from Africa to Asia to Latin America, labour NGOs also sought to organise, help and advocate on behalf of industrial workers (for example, Jose, 2002).[3] In the Asian region, labour NGOs have been active in many countries including Thailand, Malaysia, South Korea and the Philippines (McKay, 2006; Shigetomi, 2002).

The extent to which labour NGOs engage with workers in the formal sector is affected by the political and industrial relations contexts in which those NGOs operate. In countries where trade unions are relatively well established, NGOs have acted on the periphery of traditional labour movement concerns, organising workers in the free trade zones, assisting trade unions with education programs or other technical support, or working with women or migrant workers. In Malaysia, for example, NGOs have concentrated more specifically on groups which are perceived to lie outside the ambit of traditional trade unionism, particularly women and migrant workers, and on issues, such as housing and welfare, that the Malaysian Trade Union Congress considers to lie beyond its scope (Ford, 2002). By contrast, in countries where trade unions have been severely repressed — as in South Korea in the 1970s, in the Philippines under Marcos (1965–86)

and in New Order Indonesia (1966–98) — NGOs took on functions considered to be 'core' trade union activities, including consciousness-raising and grassroots organising. Indeed, although many Indonesian NGOs dealt with groups that earn their living in the informal sector or overseas, those NGOs concerned with such work were not recognised as labour NGOs, a term reserved for the small group of labour NGOs that sought to organise industrial workers or supported industrial workers through legal aid, research or policy advocacy.

In addition to their grassroots work, local labour NGOs in countries like Indonesia have participated in informal coalitions and formal advocacy networks at the national level. In the Philippines, for example, a Network of Labor Institutions was established in 1990 by a legal aid NGO with an emphasis on labour, the Archdiocese of Manila's Labor Center and the social action arm of De La Salle University in Bacolod City (Salvador, n.d.). The term 'policy advocacy NGOs' best describes those organisations that focus on lobbying the government for pro-worker policies, publicising the cases of individuals or groups of workers or campaigning for corporate reform, which tend to dominate such coalitions and networks.

Local labour NGOs also cooperate across borders. International labour activism was traditionally the province of international trade union groupings such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the Global Union Federations; national trade union bodies such as the Japanese Trade Union Confederation; and Solidarity Support Organisations such as the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS, formerly the Asian-American Free Labor Institute or AAFLI). Since the 1980s, however, the anti-sweatshop movement and international NGOs focused on labour or human rights, codes of conduct and other means to improve the rights of workers in developing countries have become increasingly prominent in pro-labour global networks. Many of these initiatives developed in response to NGO critiques of working conditions in the overseas factories of American companies such as Wal-Mart, Mattel and Nike. The Clean Clothes Campaign, the anti-Nike campaign and the Worker Rights Consortium grew out of the anti-sweatshop movement on American campuses but have since developed a global presence. Other NGOs, NGO networks and NGO-union-business forums, such as the Ethical Trading Initiative, the Fair Labor Association and the Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production Program, have worked to encourage large corporations to undertake reporting, monitoring and certification and to develop

codes of conduct (Gereffi, Garcia-Johnson and Sasser, 2001).[4] In many ways these networks run parallel to, and even sometimes overlap, international trade union structures (for example, Evans, 2000; Stiles, 2000; Warkentin, 1998).[5]

Although much of this national and international collaboration occurs within the NGO community itself, in recent decades trade unions have become increasingly involved in such initiatives. Along with national aid agencies, the European churches and private philanthropic foundations, the anti-sweatshop movement and the NGOs of the 'North', the Solidarity Support Organisations established by Northern trade unions have worked directly with local trade unions in the 'South'. However, they have also sponsored local labour NGOs, particularly in contexts where local trade unions are subject to government interference. NGOs and trade unions also collaborate within national boundaries. In South Africa, Bezuidenhout (2002) notes that although many labour NGOs were disbanded after the end of apartheid, the Congress of South African Trade Unions has made attempts to renew links with NGOs and other community-based organisations. Ho Keun Song (2002) reports that in Korea there has been significant cooperation between trade unions and new social movements as a result of "the expansion of common interests" as democratisation proceeded. In Niger, the women's departments of some trade unions have established a relationship with women's organisations and women-centred NGOs (Adji, 2002). By contrast, Indian trade unions have expressed resentment towards NGOs that organise — but do not unionise — informal sector workers (Bhattacherjee, 2002). Many unions in other national settings have also been reluctant to collaborate with NGOs because they suspect NGOs' methods and motivations.

But despite ongoing friction, trade unions and NGOs continue to cooperate in various regions of the world, including Southeast Asia. In Thailand, trade unions and NGOs campaigned jointly for improvements in occupational health and safety after a fire killed 188 people in a toy factory in May 1993 and have since developed new alliances (Brown, 2001; Brown and Chaytaweep, 2008: 108). In Malaysia, women's NGOs and the women's section of the Malaysian Trade Union Congress worked together on many issues, including the Women's Action Plan, which included a section on employment issues (Crinis, 2008; Padman, 1999). Labour NGOs and trade unions in the Asian region have also developed a number of formal networks that cross national borders, including the Asian Labor Network on International

Financial Institutions, a network established in 1999 by labour activists from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines (ALNI, n.d.), and the Global Network, whose affiliates include unions and labour NGOs in Hong Kong, Korea, Thailand, Bangladesh, India, the Philippines and Pakistan (Global Network-Asia, n.d.).

From the 1990s scholars also began to pay attention to NGOs' international labour networks and campaigns as they sought to explain the 'new globalisation' of labour issues (for example, Munck, 1993; Taylor, 1999). The rise of the anti-globalisation movement was one catalyst for the consideration of union-NGO alliances. For example, Levi and Olson (2000) identify the 1999 'Battle in Seattle' as a watershed in greater cooperation between trade unions and their 'non-union allies' on these broad global issues. Many writing in North America have also pointed to union-NGO initiatives across borders under the North American Free Trade Agreement (for example, Armbruster-Sandoval, 1999; Boswell and Stevis, 1997; Carr, 1999; Evans, 2000), a phenomenon more recently identified also in Europe. Heavily influenced by theories emerging from South Africa, some of the scholars who have sought to move beyond trade union-only accounts of labour activism developed accounts of social movement unionism that celebrated trade unions' links to community and political activists, arguing that a commitment to social transformation could become a new, global model of labour representation (for example, Adler and Webster, 2000; Moody, 1997; Seidman, 2000). Meanwhile, other scholars focused on labour's long-standing involvement with causes more closely associated with 'new' social movements in industrialised countries, such as the environment and even sexuality (for example, Hunt, 1999; Jahn, 1993), some taking this approach even further to argue that labour theorists must learn from the theoretical principles of contingency favoured by "the intellectuals of the new social movements" and engage in "new ways of imagining the workings, forms and ends of collective struggle" (Munck, 1999: 10, 15).

Despite this focus on trade union involvement in coalitions with NGOs and in other types of social movement causes, scholars have largely ignored NGO involvement in issues and practices traditionally considered the province of trade unions, failing to recognise the contribution of local labour NGOs and their international counterparts to the labour movement. Studies of developing-country industrial relations in particular have focused almost exclusively on levels of trade union coverage, trade union activities and state responses to trade unions, on

the relationship between industrialisation and industrial relations (for example, Deyo, 1989; Frenkel, 1993; Kuruvilla and Erickson, 2002) or on the political economy of organised labour (Brown, 2004; Hadiz, 1993). The failure to consider labour NGOs more seriously is explained partly by the qualitative differences in the focus of trade unions and labour NGOs. Trade unions are organisations that see labour rights as a discrete category of collective rights that are privileged above all others. By contrast, most NGOs see labour rights as a subset of a broad set of individual human rights and deal with labour issues as part of that wider agenda (see Dabscheck, 1997; Munck, 1999; Woodiwiss, 1998: 47–53). In Malaysia, for example, human rights activist and academic Loh Kok Wah has noted that "various ... NGOs which focus on women's, environmental, human rights [and] consumer issues also work with labour [but] labour NGOs per se are few and far between" (Loh, Personal Communication, 13 March 2002). Even NGOs that focus primarily or exclusively on labour issues are structured in a very different way from trade unions. Whereas trade unions are large membership-based organisations, labour NGOs are small, task-oriented organisations that neither have nor seek mass membership. While they may be associated with grassroots worker groups, they do not subsume those groups nor are they subsumed by them.[6] In addition, they are generally reliant on income streams other than membership dues. Whereas, in principle at least, membership dues constitute the primary funding base of trade unions, labour NGOs depend almost entirely on external funding, sometimes supplemented by income generated from activities such as publishing or consultancies.[7] The key difference, however, between trade unions and labour NGOs lies in the class identity of trade unionists and NGO activists. Labour NGOs characteristically have a small number of middle-class activists or staff rather than a mass or open membership. In Indonesia, where class divisions are "so profound that people from the working and middle classes do not speak the same language" (Uhlin, 1997: 117), this social chasm has largely defined the limits of NGOs' contribution to the labour movement.

Institutional Labour Intellectuals

The key to understanding the relationships between NGOs, trade unions and the state in contemporary Indonesia lies in Indonesian ideas about how labour can be represented and in the effects that

those ideas have had on the practice of organised labour. As Hadiz (1997) has argued, the role and position of labour NGOs were shaped by the industrial relations system in which they emerged. Efforts to mobilise workers have been documented in the archipelago since the late nineteenth century and trade unions played an important role in the nationalist movement preceding Independence and subsequently under Indonesia's first president, Sukarno (1945–67). However, like the rest of Indonesian society, the labour movement suffered great dislocation with the events of 1965–66, when leftist trade unions were destroyed along with the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) and other Socialist groups. Many trade unionists died in the violence that accompanied the emergence of the New Order and many others were forced to abandon their trade union activities.

Suharto's New Order was an authoritarian, corporatist state that claimed to be based on the philosophy of Pancasila, a broad statement of ideals enshrined in the 1945 Constitution that proponents from Sukarno onwards argued was indigenous to the Indonesian archipelago.[8] In New Order rhetoric, trade unions and the other institutions of industrial relations were not just a means through which to moderate the relationship between labour and capital: they were the products of a specific, Pancasila-informed approach to the relations of production, a "logical development" within the wider framework of Pancasila Democracy (Batubara, 1991: 77).[9] The architects of the New Order regime argued that interest groups were inseparable parts of an organic whole, and whose interests were indivisible from those of the state. Organicism is a model which suggests that society is like a single organism, where each 'functional group' (such as women, workers or professionals) contributes to the well-being of the whole (Bourchier, 1996). In a society organised along organic lines, there is no room for conflict.

Under the New Order, interest groups were channelled through government-defined Golongan Karya or functional groups (Bourchier, 1996; Reeve, 1985). Each of these functional groups was represented by a single, state-sanctioned body that, in theory, provided a dedicated channel through which that interest group's aspirations could be promoted. In practice, however, this system suppressed rather than channelled interest group concerns, including the concerns of industrial labour. The New Order's narrow approach to industrial relations imposed an unrepresentative trade union on workers and prevented them from organising independent alternatives within the Pancasila Industrial

Relations system. Organised opposition was, by necessity, located outside those officially recognised structures. The process of creating alternative vehicles for workers' discontent gained momentum after state control of organised labour reached its height in 1985, when the trade union federation established by the regime in 1973 was replaced by a single trade union.

Despite growing worker unrest in the early 1990s, institutional controls over labour representation and the direct persecution of worker-activists succeeded in preventing the independent development of effective alternative trade unions. In this repressive context, labour NGOs emerged as the main sponsor of organised opposition to the New Order's industrial relations system. Since they did not directly challenge the state's one-union policy, labour NGOs were afforded organisational space not available to trade unionists in a context defined by bans on independent trade unionism. Moreover, international pressure protected them from the full force of government repression. As Minister for Defence and Security General Edi Sudradjat complained to a student group in 1994:

> NGOs package domestic issues for international consumption ... They can influence international relations because they are extremely active in internationalising issues and shaping public opinion (cited in *Kompas*, 30 September 1994).

Labour NGOs were also afforded discursive space by their framing of labour rights as human rights which, as the head of the Armed Forces' Social and Political Affairs Division Major-General Hartono noted, allowed them to:

> ... undermine the authority of the government and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia ... by using universal themes such as democratisation, openness and human rights (cited in *Kompas*, 7 November 1994).

In fact, as James Riker and Mohtar Mas'oed have noted, the constraints on trade unions, student groups and political parties meant that NGOs were one of the few possible independent organisational forms available to social activists in New Order Indonesia (Mas'oed, 1989; Riker, 1998: 53–5).

The rise of these labour NGOs cannot be divorced from a more general upsurge in NGO activity in Indonesia (Billah, Busyairi and Aly, 1993a; Eldridge, 1995). The many politically focused NGOs

that emerged in the 1980s provided a means through which affluent, educated, middle-class Indonesians could become involved in political and social activism. At first, they couched their aims and activities in the language of development, as demanded by the political and legal contexts of the time. However, they changed their approach when the economic liberalisation of the mid- to late 1980s and the end of the Cold War brought a period of political 'openness' (*keterbukaan*) in Indonesia. Less oppressive policies at home and strengthening connections between international aid and trade agendas and human rights during this period created conditions that allowed NGO activists to be more direct about their agendas and more openly confrontational on issues like the forced relocation of communities, environmental degradation and workers' rights.

The government first seriously attempted to limit NGO influence under legislation promulgated in 1985, which obliged all social organisations to register with the relevant government department and join an umbrella organisation analogous to other functional groups. In theory, the law in question provided for the suspension or dissolution of any NGO that undertook activities which threatened national security, received overseas aid without government clearance or assisted foreign parties to the detriment of the national interest (Lubis, 1993: 213–30). The law was never fully implemented, although surveillance of NGOs increased markedly during this time. In 1990 the Minister of Internal Affairs Yogie S. Memet issued a Ministerial Instruction on the management of 'Community Self Help Organisations'. The Instruction was designed to better control NGOs after demonstrations over the Kedung Ombo dam, a World Bank project that became a focus for middle-class protest actions (Stanley, 1994). In 1992 the government made another attempt to limit the power of NGOs by banning Dutch funding and in 1994 attempts were made to lobby for a Presidential Decree on NGOs. Government suspicion of NGOs reached new heights when on 27 July 1996 the headquarters of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, PDI-P) were stormed and struggles broke out between the military and party supporters. The Democratic People's Party (Party Rakyat Demokratik, PRD) and a group of NGOs described as vehicles for renewed Communist activity were also targeted in the crackdown (*Jakarta Crackdown*, 1997).[10]

The fact that some highly critical NGOs escaped sanction indicated that the government recognised the links between international

human rights organisations, domestic NGOs and Indonesia's diplomatic and trade relations. The failure of successive attempts to better regulate NGOs also in part reflected divisions within the regime. Phillip Eldridge (1995) provides a detailed account of cases where individuals in the government and the bureaucracy actually supported NGOs, arguing that the 1985 law on social organisations was not as effective as it might have been because of rivalry between government departments. For example, the speech in which Minister for Internal Affairs Yogie S. Memet introduced Ministerial Instruction No. 8/1990 on Guidelines for the Guidance of Community Self Help Organisations was conciliatory in tone. The Minister described the guidelines as an initiative that would increase communication between regional governments and NGOs, rather than control or limit NGO activities. NGOs were, he said, organisations that work with "marginal" people, who act as the government's "partners", undertaking activities that complement government programs (Yogie, 1995). Yet a year later, NGOs were being described as "agitators" by Deputy Head of Indonesia's Lower House of Parliament Saiful Sulun and accused of being "the long arm of subversion" by security chief and one-time Minister for Manpower Admiral Sudomo (Soeriawidjaja *et al.*, 1991). But notwithstanding the fact that the Department of Internal Affairs closed between ten and 30 NGOs per year in the mid-1990s because of their involvement in illegal activities (Kusyuniati, 1998: 309), the regime's attempts to control NGO activity were relatively benign.

The final and arguably most important influence on the nature and role of labour NGOs in Indonesia is the position of intellectuals. Labour NGO activists, like their counterparts in other Indonesian NGOs, recognised that their middle-class background and tertiary education made them part of the intellectual elite. In Indonesia, as elsewhere, 'intellectual' is a modern concept that has served as one of a series of "map-words" outlining the new dimensions of the social world (c.f. Bell, 1980). Arief Budiman (1981) argues that traditional Javanese concepts of power are based on the notion of an absence of personal interest in politics. This understanding resonates with the arguments of liberal theorists, in the tradition of writers such as Julien Benda (1955), who describe intellectuals in terms of their ability to distance themselves, to possess and guard independent judgment and to be untainted by practical objectives or self-interest.

NGO activists' close links with the student movement prompted Indonesian activists and commentators to situate those NGOs within

the traditions of Boedi Oetomo, the conservative association founded in 1908 to promote the study of Javanese culture, and Sarekat Islam, an association of Muslim traders founded in 1909 — the organisations identified as the intellectual pioneers of nationalism in the late colonial period (for example, Billah and Nusantara, 1988; Hikam, 1999). During the late colonial period and after Independence, however, Indonesian concepts of the intellectual came to be linked to ideas about leadership and Western-style education, particularly as Dutch-educated intellectuals were strongly associated with the nationalist movement and other social causes. Many texts from the early post-Independence period used the term 'the educated' (*kaum terpeladjar*) as the Indonesian translation of 'intellectual' (for example, Proleter Indonesia, 1946; SOBSI, 1958).[11]

The synonymous use of 'educated person' and 'intellectual' remained common in the official discourse of the post-Independence period. For example, in a speech exhorting an audience of new graduates to fulfil their "special duties" as members of the intelligentsia, Indonesia's first Vice-President, Mohammad Hatta, explicitly identified the intelligentsia as the graduates of universities and institutes of higher learning, saying that he hoped that those present would continue that tradition by devoting their full energy to national development and arguing that "[a]s long as the masses are still enveloped in darkness, it is the educated who must open their eyes to their rights as part of a free nation" (Hatta, 1966: 29). Indeed, a Western education remained a "primary criterion defining membership in the elite" throughout the twentieth century (Liddle, 1996: 71). As the late Selosoemardjan described it:

> Large sectors of the population ... believe that a university diploma is a guarantee of supremely trained intellect and therefore supersedes all other faculties in society. In fact, it can even be said without exaggeration that a university degree in modern Indonesian social life functions in the same way as the now desocialized aristocratic titles before the 1945 revolution (Selosoemardjan, 1981: 140–52).

Students' nationalist credentials and their status as a moral force were reinforced in 1965–66 when elements of the student movement supported the establishment of the New Order. However, student support for the New Order was soon compromised. By the early 1970s, there were widespread protests about government policies and projects such as Madam Tien Suharto's Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park

(Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, TMII). Protests demanding lower prices and an end to corruption culminated in the Malari riots of 15 January 1974, after which student leaders were jailed en masse. Student protests peaked again before and after the 1977 elections. Campus activism was then effectively marginalised from mainstream political life when the army occupied universities and independent student councils were abolished under the Normalisation of Campus Life (Normalisasi Kehidupan Kampus, NKK) program in 1978 (Budiman, 1981).

In response to the suppression of campus activism, student activists began to form study groups or NGOs. Although the NGOs they formed were spread across a wide ideological spectrum, most addressed concerns about the effects of development on the poorer members of society. As Ariel Heryanto observes:

> 'Empowering the powerless' [became] a common aim of many NGOs, lawyers, human rights activists, journalists and socially committed artists. Peasant resistance to the Kedong Ombo dam project, protest at the death of Marsinah and worker protest in Medan are only a few examples of such alliances that have gained impressive success and international fame (Heryanto, 1988: 263–4).

The death of Marsinah, a young worker activist in East Java who was raped, tortured and murdered after participating in strike negotiations with the police, the military and management in May 1993 was a flashpoint for the opposition movement, but particularly for labour NGOs (see Ford, 2003a; Kammen, 1997).

Hewison and Rodan (1996) have argued that in Southeast Asia NGOs have provided "space for ideological debate", a task traditionally performed by the Left. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci's proposition that any intellectual who promoted the interests of a movement or class was part of that movement or class rather than an outside force, M.M. Billah and his colleagues argued that Indonesian NGOs acted as organic intellectuals (Billah, 1995; Billah, Busyairi and Aly, 1993a). However, as Heryanto (1988: 263–4) notes, cross-class alliances remained decidedly ad hoc, not only because of state oppression and limited resources but also because of class-related differences in lifestyles and values. As a consequence, while NGO activists adopted the international language of partnership, in practice they remained as sharply defined against the 'masses' as the intelligentsia of nineteenth-century Russia.

Ron Eyerman (1994: 47, 198) distinguishes between this classical mode of intellectualism found in both liberal and Marxist traditions and "movement intellectuals", individuals who adopt a modern mode of intellectualism characteristic of a "more differentiated and literate, social context" where there is little gap between educated people and the masses. Eyerman argues that while traces of the classical mode of intellectualism persist in all modern contexts, it is found predominantly in the more socially and economically differentiated societies of the developing world (Eyerman, 1990: 102; 1994: 47). According to Eyerman, contemporary movement intellectuals are:

> ... neither the déclassé visionaries claiming insight into the path of history who joined the newly forming working-class movements of the nineteenth century, nor are they their classically educated liberal counterparts armed with moral example and a notion of the progressive public, although traces of both can still be found. Today's movement intellectuals ... [are] 'organic' intellectuals in the Gramscian sense, who, for the moment at least, appear to have rejected the privilege of being part of a new class formation (Eyerman, 1990: 102).

These movement intellectuals subtly illuminate social processes in contexts where the gap between intellectuals and the masses is quite small. Eyerman (1994: 47) argues that, by contrast, the classical intellectuals of less developed societies "do not simply give voice, [but] give language, providing the very means through which insight is possible". In Indonesia, this classical mode of the intellectual as 'educator of the uneducated' has continued to resonate through the NGO movement in general and among labour NGOs in particular.

As Patrick Joyce (1991: 96) notes, citing Frederic Jameson, "the dialogue of class struggle is (normally) one in which two opposing discourses fight it out within the general unity of a shared code". In New Order Indonesia, debates about the legitimacy of labour NGOs took place within a shared understanding about the role of intellectuals in the labour movement and the economic character of trade unionism. The position of labour NGOs and other non-union groups *vis-à-vis* workers was defined by two main constructs about intellectuals and trade unions in New Order labour discourse. The first was the concept of a trade union run by and for workers, for their own economic welfare and in the national interest. The second denotes the non-worker 'outsider' who seeks to use labour for his/her own purposes. The

New Order state considered NGO involvement in labour issues to be acceptable as long as their activities remained within state-prescribed boundaries of NGO activity. However, their attempts to move beyond those boundaries brought them into conflict with the historically defined 'institution' of organised labour, in which there was no place for non-worker intellectuals.

Although labour NGO activists resisted the limits imposed on them by the government, they understood their position in relation to workers and trade unions in almost identical terms. The government promoted a system of industrial relations supposedly based on the indigenous principles of Pancasila, while NGO activists claimed to be committed to universal principles of labour rights as human rights, as promoted by the international NGO community, and to the formation of independent trade unions. Both these approaches were based on a conservative understanding of trade unionism and worker activism that offers no place for institutional non-worker intellectuals in the labour movement. As the chapters that follow show, even the most far-thinking NGO activists and trade unionists struggled long and hard with the belief that the labour movement is necessarily constituted entirely of worker-led unions. However, ultimately they rejected it in favour of a more inclusive model in which individual and institutional intellectuals can also be part of the labour movement.

Structure of the Book

The first three chapters of this study explain the evolution of the political and labour relations contexts in which labour NGOs operated. Drawing attention to the continuities between structures of labour relations under the New Order and 'what came before', they show how ideas about labour representation materialised and evolved and how those ideas affected the way labour organising was perceived and structured. Chapters One and Two begin this process by tracing the institutional and conceptual histories of organised labour in Indonesia, showing how Pancasila Industrial Relations combined a corporatist framework with a Revisionist emphasis on apolitical trade unions by, for and of workers. Chapter Three then maps the emergence of the independent labour movement in the 1990s, describing the different groups involved in that movement and explaining how the government's responses to them were driven by its desire to harness trade unions for development and its fear of a resurgence of the political Left.

The next three chapters are based on an ethnographic exploration of the relationships between labour NGO activists, workers, unions and the state.[12] These chapters show that labour NGO activists believed themselves to be outside intellectuals who had no rightful place in the organised labour movement, a perception that had serious implications for both the strategies they adopted and their relationships with workers. Chapter Four sets the scene by offering a detailed account of how NGOs came to be engaged in policy advocacy and grassroots organising and how they were situated in relation to other actors in the independent labour movement. It also provides an overview of the 25 NGOs that contributed to this study. Chapter Five explains how the gap between working-class and middle-class Indonesians shaped the relationship between student and NGO activists and workers, arguing that both these middle-class groups performed as classical labour intellectuals. Chapter Six then describes NGO and worker assessments of NGO and student involvement in the labour activism of the 1990s, concluding that while NGO activists believed themselves to be outsiders, many worker-activists rejected this proposition, instead criticising NGOs for not committing fully to the labour movement.

The last two chapters turn to the dramatic changes that occurred in the first decade of the post-Suharto period. Chapter Seven traces the structural changes in labour relations after the New Order collapsed and the right of workers to organise freely was recognised. Finally, Chapter Eight examines the impact of those changes on labour NGOs, arguing that the reactions of NGO activists, trade unionists and workers to the new climate constituted a shift in the boundaries of the Indonesian labour movement. The book concludes by taking up this theme, suggesting that the Indonesian case demands that we move beyond traditional trade union-centred definitions of the labour movement to recognise NGOs and other non-union bodies as labour movement organisations in their own right.

1

The Making of the Indonesian Labour Movement

International observers sometimes talk about Indonesia's new trade unions as if they were the first independent trade unions ever formed in the archipelago. In fact, trade unions emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century in what was then known as Nederlandsch-Indië (the Netherlands East Indies), when they were among the strongest 'modern' mass organisations in the early decades of last century, struggling for both their members' economic interests in the workplace and in the nationalist movement against Dutch colonial rule. Trade unionists then cemented their position in the newly independent Indonesia of the 1940s and 1950s when their organisations were accorded recognition as an important political and socio-economic force. The ability of unions to represent the interests of their members politically and in the workplace began to decline with the advent of Guided Democracy in the late 1950s as Indonesia's political and social structures were reshaped along authoritarian corporatist lines. However, it was only with the coming of Suharto's New Order (1966–98) that trade unions — along with organisations representing other groups in society — were reduced to being instruments of the authoritarian state. Forced to sever its links with political parties, the organised labour movement was no longer permitted to represent the political interests of its members and even its mandate to promote their economic welfare was circumscribed by the 'national interest'.

This chapter traces the institutional history of organised labour in Indonesia from the late colonial period to the end of the New Order, documenting the transformation of trade unions from a politically powerful element of the nationalist movement in the late

colonial period to a tool of economic development, supposedly free of the 'taint' of political unionism. This long and rich history of labour activism constitutes the background against which the independent labour movement was reconstructed from the early 1990s, first as an oppositional movement initiated and sustained by middle-class activists, then as a new and reconfigured trade union movement in post-Suharto Indonesia.

The Foundations of Indonesian Trade Unionism

Indonesia's early trade unions were concentrated in the formal sector, which historically provided work for only a small part of the population. In 1905 manufacturing employed just 16 per cent of the colonial labour force, the majority of whom worked in cottage industry rather than as waged workers (Saptari, 1995: 23). Even by 1930, only around 2.2 million of the 20 million 'native persons' who reported a pursuit in the colonial census of that year worked in government service, industry and transportation (census statistics cited in Hawkins, 1963b: 250; Pillai, 1947: 71). Although the formal sector grew with the manufacturing boom that took place in Java in the 1930s as a result of renewed attempts to encourage industrialisation during the depression (Booth, 1998: 42–9), on the eve of World War II the Indonesian economy was still heavily dependent on exports of primary products and the manufacturing sector remained extremely small (Manning, 1998: 46). Yet although the formal sector was tiny, its workforce was heavily unionised. Over the three decades after the formation of Indonesia's first trade union for native workers in 1908, hundreds of trade unions were formed. Trade unions were strongest in the agricultural sector, particularly in Java's massive sugar industry, which was home to the largest private sector trade union of the period, along with transport and communication and the civil service (Hawkins, 1963b: 257).

In his seminal work on Indonesia's early trade unions, John Ingleson divided colonial labour history into three phases. The first phase was characterised by industrial militancy before a government crackdown on strikers following a protracted railway workers' strike in 1923, a wave of strikes in the city of Surabaya in 1925–26 and the subsequent destruction and proscription of the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) in 1926 (Ingleson, 1981; 1986). Thereafter, the labour movement sought to establish trade union-sponsored forms of social security, a focus which continued through the depression years (Ingleson, 2000). Finally, the movement entered a period of growing

emphasis on private sector unionism in the years of economic recovery between 1936 and 1941 before trade unions were forced into inactivity by the Japanese Occupation of 1942–45 (Ingleson, 2001).[1]

In the 1920s and 1930s, trade unions constituted the largest urban organisations in the Indies with a collective membership of around 100,000, being five times the total membership of political parties at that time (Ingleson, 2000: 471–7). The trade unions were an important vehicle of modernity, closely tied to the nationalist struggle for Independence through their Western-educated leaders, who were part of the nationalist elite (Ingleson, 2001). Because teachers, government employees and skilled workers were key political constituencies, trade unions became "important training grounds for middle level leaders of nationalist parties" (Ingleson, 1986: 5). It is therefore not surprising that the two largest nationalist organisations were the strongest promoters of trade unionism in the final decades of colonial rule (Ingleson, 1986: 4). The Islamic Traders' Association (Sarekat Dagang Islam) was formed in 1911 and was known from 1912 as Sarekat Islam (SI). The Indies Social Democratic Association (Indische Sociaal Democratische Vereeniging, ISDV), the precursor of the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) was formed three years later. Both organisations promoted labour organising in the mid- to late 1910s,[2] and in 1919 SI and ISDV leaders met in Bandung to discuss plans to unite their associated unions. On 25 December of the same year a convention of 22 trade unions representing 72,000 workers was held in Yogyakarta, where the Union of Workers' Movements (Persatuan Pergerakan Kaum Buruh, PPKB) was formed (McVey, 1965: 43–5). PPKB split again two years later, only to be reformed under a different name in 1922.

Alliances and splits between nationalist forces and the trade union movement reflected political interests and ideological differences. However, debates around strategy and purpose took place within a shared commitment to class struggle as a means of ridding the Indies of its colonial masters. Ingleson argues that Communists and non-Communists alike adopted a class analysis in the 1910s and 1920s because Socialist thought complemented traditional concepts of the nobility's duty to the 'little people' (*orang kecil/wong cilik*), concepts which were deeply rooted in the culture of Java where the labour movement was most developed (Ingleson, 1986: 5–6). Intellectuals involved in the labour movement at that time shared with other progressives of their class a strong sense of the difference between themselves and 'ordinary people'. This class divide was reflected in metaphors commonly used

to describe the relationship between trade union leaders and the rank and file, such as conductor and orchestra, teacher and student, father and child, and spirit and body (Ingleson, 2001: 95; Scherer, 1977: 29–32).

Leftist sentiment grew in the Netherlands East Indies at a time when the colonial government had moved to liberalise social policy. Trade unionism was permitted under the so-called Ethical Policy, implemented by the Dutch in the first decades of the twentieth century to improve health care, education and infrastructure in the Netherlands East Indies.[3] During this period, an acceptable trade union was one that adopted an economic form of unionism that did not recognise the broader social and political interests of workers. As Ingleson has argued:

> To the colonial state and European employers, an acceptable labour union was one that worked to improve the moral, spiritual and material life of urban workers by providing social welfare and promoting self-help. Their ire was directed not at this kind of unionism but at those labour unions that stressed the class struggle, engaged in direct industrial action or were closely connected to the anti-colonial nationalist parties (Ingleson, 2000: 480).

The Communist and Muslim unions of the period pursued both political and socio-economic agendas (Ingleson, 2001), causing the colonial government to become increasingly concerned that even ostensibly economic demands were underpinned by broader political aims (Stoler, 1995: 63). Pressure on trade unions grew after the railway workers' strike of 1923, culminating in a crackdown on labour organising after a further wave of strikes in 1925–26. As part of this crackdown, the Attorney-General pushed to have all non-trade unionists removed from the executive committee of the militant Railway and Tram Workers' Union (Vereeniging van Spoor-en Tram Personeel, VSTP) and to ban government employees from membership of the PKI or Sarekat Islam (Ingleson, 1986: 313).

The destruction of the PKI and its associated unions at the end of 1926 marked the end of the first phase of trade union militancy in Indonesia. This was a time Muslim trade union sources described as a period of reflection, as it took place after trade unionists realised that radical action had failed (Pengurus Besar GASBIINDO, 1964). New regulations banning strikes and fear of government repression forced the remaining trade unions to focus heavily on social security programs and other economic measures in order to attract members,

while political parties seeking to organise workers also turned their attention to the private sector (Ingleson, 2000). Trade union membership then collapsed when the Great Depression hit the Indies in mid-1930, causing trade union activities to contract even further (Hawkins, 1963b: 258). However, the trade unions began to gain ground again half a decade later with the recovery of the economy, making them once again some of the strongest organisations in urban Indonesia before they were closed down during the Japanese Occupation of 1942–45 (Ingleson, 2000: 493; 2001: 100).

After Independence

Upon the surrender of the Japanese in August 1945, organised labour quickly regrouped to form the Indonesian Labour Front (Barisan Buruh Indonesia, BBI). According to S.K. Trimurti (1975: 15), a prominent trade unionist and leader of the Indonesian Labour Party (Partai Buruh Indonesia, PBI), who became the Republic's first Minister for Labour in 1947–48, the BBI was established to mobilise workers as part of the struggle for independence rather than as members of a trade union. It was not long, however, before the BBI turned its attention to labour issues, holding its first congress on 7 November 1945. At this meeting, there was a split between those who believed the Front should be structured as a union and those who believed it should become a political party (Pengurus Besar GASBIINDO, 1964; Trimurti, 1975). A year later at its second congress, the name Federation of Indonesian Labour Unions (Gabungan Serikat Buruh Indonesia, GASBI) was adopted, signalling the BBI's future as a trade union. In the same year, the PBI was formed under the leadership of Syamsu Harya Udaya, who also headed GASBI (Brown, 1994). GASBI's leadership briefly split, leading to the formation of the Federation of Vertical Unions (Gabungan Serikat Buruh Vertikal, GSBV), but GASBI and GSBV reunited on 26 November 1946 as the Central Organisation of Indonesian Trade Unions (Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, SOBSI).

Initially a coalition of Communist and non-Communist trade unionists, SOBSI maintained a "virtual monopoly" on organised labour within the Republic before 1948 (Hindley, 1966: 133). Although many Communist cadres and the chair of SOBSI were killed in the Madiun Affair, the organisation was left with a Communist-dominated executive after many of its non-Communist elements withdrew from the organisation (Hindley, 1966). Although in practice SOBSI was now

closely identified with the PKI, it continued to emphatically assert its independence (see, for example, SOBSI, 1958). SOBSI's membership was concentrated amongst rank-and-file workers employed on the railways, in the oil industry and on plantations, while white-collar workers in those industries were attracted to the non-Communist unions (Hawkins, 1963b: 259)

SOBSI's affiliated unions were just some of the many trade unions from across the political spectrum that were established or re-established before 1950. Like SOBSI, the other large national trade unions of the post-Independence period had close links with the political parties of the day. The next largest union, the Indonesian People's Labour Union (Kesatuan Buruh Kerakyatan Indonesia, KBKI) was associated with the powerful Indonesian Nationalist Party (Partai Nasionalis Indonesia, PNI), and the third largest trade union body, the Indonesian Islamic Labour Union (Serikat Buruh Islam Indonesia, SBII), was associated with the Muslim party Masyumi. SBII was just one of a number of trade unions in this period affiliated with Christian and Muslim parties. Other important trade unions included the All-Indonesia Workers' Congress (Kongres Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, KBSI), which was linked to the Indonesian Socialist Party (Partai Sosialis Indonesia, PSI) and the leftist Central Organisation of Indonesian Workers (Sentral Organisasi Buruh Republik Indonesia, SOBRI), which had links to the Proletarian Party (Partai Murba) (Hawkins, 1963b: 260).

Indonesia's Communist trade unions quickly established links with the international labour movement and the Comintern. A number of foreigners attended the first SOBSI Congress in 1947, including representatives from the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the Australian Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF) as well as Communist trade unions in the Netherlands and Malaya.[4] SOBSI representatives attended the general assembly of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in Prague in the same year and the Asian and Australian conference in Peking in 1949. International ties established by the non-Communist trade unions were not as strong, although a number of Muslim unions were affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Meanwhile, the Catholic Federation of Pancasila Workers' Organisations (Sentral Organisasi Buruh Pantjasila, SOB Pantjasila) and the Protestant Union of Christian Workers of the Republic of Indonesia (Kesatuan Pekerja Kristen Republik Indonesia, Kespekri) joined the Christian World Confederation of Labour (WCL).

As in the late colonial period, the importance of trade unions in the mid-1950s was reflected in their membership. By 1955, SOBSI alone had a membership of over 2.6 million members, a figure that grew to over 3.2 million members by 1962, constituting over 50 per cent of organised workers in Indonesia (Hindley, 1966: 135, 140).[5] The 12 largest national trade unions and trade union federations claimed to have a combined membership of 5 million by 1958 (Hawkins, 1963a: 260). This was a large figure, given that at the time of the 1961 census only around half of a total population of almost 64 million over the age of ten was employed and just over 2.5 million people had jobs in manufacturing, transportation, storage and communication (Badan Pusat Statistik, 1963: 3–6). The greatest number of trade unionists worked in the plantation sector, followed by workers in the oil industry, transport and communication, teachers, government employees and other white-collar workers, and finally those in small manufacturing and services (Elliott, 1997: 27). This distribution reflected the fact that industrial growth had been slow after Independence. The manufacturing sector had grown at an average annual rate of 14 per cent between 1953 and 1957 but manufacturing output stagnated and then declined in the early to mid-1960s (Booth, 1998: 54–66).

Java-based trade unions continued to dominate the organised labour movement throughout this period, although North Sumatra was also a major centre of activity (Table 1).

Table 1 Membership of Registered Unions by Region, 1957

Region	*Membership*	*Percentage*
Medan	366,472	14.9%
Padang	27,891	1.1%
Palembang	68,955	2.8%
Bandung	415,399	17.0%
Semarang	335,358	13.7%
Surabaya	650,326	26.5%
Makassar	26,714	1.1%
Banjarmasin	26,161	1.1%
Jakarta	126,403	5.2%
Other	406,043	16.6%
Total	2,449,722	100.0%

Source: Hawkins (1971: 107).

As Anne Stoler reports, North Sumatran plantation workers quickly "earned the reputation of being among the most organized and militant in Indonesia", taking a lead role in a wave of strikes in a wide spectrum of industries across the archipelago in 1950 (Stoler, 1995: 122). The SOBSI-affiliated plantation workers' union led the first of these strikes, involving more than 80,000 workers and supported by transport and communications workers. Strikes were then banned in all 'vital industries' just months before the passing of the Emergency Law of September 1951, which designated a three-week cooling-off period before any trade union could strike (Stoler, 1995: 142). But these attempts to curb industrial action had little impact. Between 1951 and 1955, 11,736 industrial disputes were recorded, among them 1,787 strikes involving almost one million workers, around 31 per cent of which occurred in the foreign-dominated plantation sector and another 19 per cent in secondary industry. In the four years that followed, there were over 14,000 disputes but only 631 strikes involving close to half a million workers (Suroto, 1985: 31).

Most specialised accounts of labour in these first two decades after Independence have focused on the politicisation of trade unions. This is hardly surprising because, as Sayuti Hasibuan noted in his doctoral thesis on political trade unionism in North Sumatra:

> [The] political and economic significance [of labor unions] is far out of proportion to their membership or economic strength. Every figure on the Indonesian political scene courts labor ... [and every] major political party in Indonesia has its labor arm (Hasibuan, 1968: 5).

Commenting from a position far to the left of Hasibuan's, S.K. Trimurti nevertheless echoed his observation:

> There were trade unions that did not want to become part of a political party, but in reality they became satellites of particular parties, either directly or indirectly. It was not surprising that if there was tension between the political parties, there was also tension between the trade unions (Trimurti, 1975: 21).

According to Hasibuan, the politicisation of Indonesian unions was sufficient grounds to dismiss them from serious consideration as trade unions:

> The labor federations or labor unions [post-1948] can hardly be regarded as labor federations or unions in the ordinary sense of

> the term. They behaved and acted like political parties, except that they counted on workers and laborers for their mass support. There was a marked absence of collective bargaining or other activities designed directly to promote the interests of workers, although their programs contained general economic objectives that would promote the interests of labor as a group (Hasibuan, 1968: 57).

As Jan Elliott (1997) demonstrates, however, trade unions did undertake important welfare and grassroots organising work during this period. Elliott's interpretation is supported by union and party accounts of the labour movement written in the 1950s and 1960s, which emphasised the importance of the economic struggle within the necessarily dual economic and political objectives of Indonesian trade unionism. Although Communist labour histories emphasised the political aspects of strikes, they almost always also included lists of economic demands (for example, Aidit, 1952; SOBSI, 1952). Conversely, the accounts of non-Communist trade unions such as the Indonesian Association of Muslim Unions (Gabungan Sarekat Buruh Islam Indonesia, GASBIINDO) emphasised the socio-economic achievements of Indonesia's labour movement but also acknowledged the political functions of trade unions (for example, Pengurus Besar GASBIINDO, 1964). Elliott's claims are also given weight by material evidence of trade unions' economic programs. At the national level, trade unions worked closely with relevant ministries of the Republic, helping to set social policy that affected the working classes. A raft of pro-worker legislation was passed which, alongside a significant body of law inherited from the Dutch colonial government, constituted Indonesia's industrial relations framework for the remainder of the twentieth century. Engaged at the grassroots level as well as in economically motivated actions and strikes, trade unions were heavily involved in activities related to workers' economic welfare, establishing their own social security programs. For example, in 1961, SOBSI launched a three-year plan for educational and cultural activities while in 1962 almost 20,000 workers completed SOBSI-run literacy courses and 145 SOBSI new sports teams and 11 new choirs were formed (Hindley, 1966: 139).

Although trade unions continued to function in the first half of the 1960s, their activities were severely curtailed after the introduction of Guided Democracy (1959–65), a period which also marked the genesis of the political system that dominated Indonesia until 1998. The parliamentary system had become increasingly unstable after the

1955 election, as government lurched from one coalition to another and the army sought to quell successive rebellions in the Outer Islands. In response to the Sumatran Rebellion, regional military commanders seized control over much of Sumatra in December 1956, marking the beginning of a two-year period that redefined the role of the army not only in politics but also in the economy (Crouch, 1988: 33). Three months later, in an event that Daniel Lev describes as "the death blow to the parliamentary system", martial law was declared the day after the failure of the second Ali Sastroamidjojo Cabinet (Lev, 1966: 12). Then, on 21 March 1957, President Sukarno announced his anti-party 'Concept' (*Konsepsi*), proposing a Cooperative Cabinet (*Kabinet Gotong-Royong*) made up of representatives from four major parties, including the PKI, and a National Council (*Dewan Nasional*) consisting of representatives of selected functional groups, known as *golongan karya* or its acronym *golkar* (Feith, 1963: 319–20; Reeve, 1985: 115–19).

Sukarno's proposed Cooperative Cabinet was blocked by the non-Communist political parties, the army and regionalists from the Outer Islands, who feared the rising influence of the PKI. This prompted the president to introduce an extra-parliamentary alternative, the 'Work Cabinet' (*Kabinet Karya*), in April 1957, which was responsible to the Parliament but not fully under its control (Lev, 1966: 18–23). Three months later, he inaugurated the National Council, a body designed to reinforce the authority of the Cabinet and to provide a foil to the ideologically driven party system. Chaired by Sukarno, it included the chiefs of staff of the army, navy and air force, the police chief, the attorney-general, the three deputy prime ministers and 14 regional representatives, as well as representatives of 21 functional groups, including labour, peasants, youth, former armed revolutionaries, national entrepreneurs, artists, journalists and women (Reeve, 1985: 115–19). Labour was represented in the National Council by Ahem Erningpradja, Head of the KBKI, the union federation associated with the PNI, and Munir, the Deputy Secretary-General of SOBSI (Lev, 1966; Tejasukmana, 1959).

The military's concerted attempt to insert itself into the political system soon directly affected organised labour. In November 1957 the UN Assembly rejected a motion for the Dutch to hand over the territory of Irian Barat, the Indonesian name for the Western half of the island of New Guinea. In response to the UN decision, Dutch enterprises were occupied by SOBSI and KBKI in early December (Feith, 1963: 320–1; Lev, 1966: 33). Later that month, trade unions

were instructed to hand over control of the Dutch companies to military personnel, for the first time bringing the military into direct conflict with trade unionists (Hadiz, 1997: 52). In the same month, the military attempted to expand its involvement in labour affairs with the formation of the Labour-Military Cooperative Body (Badan Kerjasama-Buruh Militer, BKS-BUMIL), one of a series of cooperative bodies established by the army to increase its influence with the functional groups represented in the National Council. The army then reinforced its control over Indonesia's political system as a whole with the extension of martial law. The regional military commanders who had controlled the Outer Islands since early 1957 issued an ultimatum to the central government, demanding that the PKI be removed from the central government. That ultimatum was not met and in February 1958 the rebel commanders established the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia, PRRI) (Lev, 1966: 36–42). Four months later, it was announced that national elections due to be held in the following year were to be postponed (Lev, 1966: 164). On 20 February 1959, the government proposed a return to the 1945 Constitution, which accorded much greater power to the president than under the democratic 1950 Constitution then in force, a proposal opposed by the main Muslim parties. However, after the army had banned all political activities in May and June 1959, on 2 July 1959 the Constituent Assembly (*Konstituante*) voted to return the 1945 Constitution. On 5 July, Sukarno then issued a decree dissolving the Constituent Assembly and formally reinstating the 1945 Constitution (Feith, 1963: 360–1; Lev, 1966: 268–70).

As Lev has argued, the extension of martial law and the subsequent structural marginalisation of the political parties represented a "serious political blow" for the labour unions, particularly SOBSI. Under army control, union activity was severely restricted. Strikes were outlawed in military-designated 'vital industries', trade unions had to seek permission to hold any kind of action and, in some regions, the military administration took on a role in industrial dispute resolution (Lev, 1966: 63–4). The military's efforts to co-opt the unions directly were less successful. In May 1960, after the failure of the BKS-BUMIL, the army established a new organisation, the Central Organisation of Indonesian Socialist Workers (Sentral Organisasi Karyawan Sosialis Indonesia, SOKSI) as a foil for SOBSI in the now military-run plantations.[6] The army's attempts to control the functional groups

were renewed first through attempts to incorporate them into the National Front for the Liberation of West Irian (Front Pembebasan Nasional Irian Barat, FPNIB) and later through the Joint Secretariat of the Functional Group Organisations of the National Front (Sekretariat Bersama Organisasi-Organisasi Golongan Karya Anggota Front Nasional, Sekber Golkar).

In 1964–65 there was a resurgence in PKI militancy after SOBSI took control of several British companies and plantations during Sukarno's campaign of Confrontation (*Konfrontasi*) against the new, British-sponsored nation of Malaysia, followed by widespread PKI-led demonstrations against the United States of America and Great Britain. The PKI then began a series of unilateral actions (*aksi sepihak*), campaigning against landholders and mobilising peasants to occupy the military-run, state-owned plantations (Crouch, 1988: 62–4). In an attempt to check the influence of the PKI, the Proletarian Party (Partai Murba) proposed that existing parties be dissolved and a one-party state be created, but its proposal was defeated and the party's leadership arrested, further strengthening the position of the PKI (Crouch, 1988: 65–6). Rumours of a potential army coup gained momentum as the PKI continued to gain support and engage in public displays of strength on May Day and the anniversary of the PKI's founding on 23 May 1965 (Roosa, 2006: 205–11). The PKI was finally crushed when the army took control after an abortive Communist coup attempt on 30 September 1965 in which the army commander Lieutenant-General Achmad Yani and five other army generals were abducted and murdered (Roosa, 2006: 3).[7] Trade unions lost the little that remained of their privileged status in the anti-Communist purges that followed the attempted coup in which hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of Indonesians died (Cribb, 2002: 557; Roosa, 2006: 198). The most powerful trade unions, including SOBSI, were destroyed along with other leftist groups in the brutal reprisals (see Cribb, 1990), leaving organised labour in a seriously weakened state.

Economic Trade Unionism for Development

Suharto assumed power on 11 March 1966 and his executive status was formally acknowledged by Resolution IX of the Transitional People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Sementara, MPRS) in its 20 June–5 July sitting. He was appointed Acting President nine months later in a special session of MPRS and in 1968 was

granted full presidential status (Elson, 2001: 152–65). Suharto's New Order regime declared two priorities. The first of these was to safeguard the Constitution of 1945 and Pancasila, the ideology enshrined within it, both of which it claimed "had been imperilled in previous years". The second was "the rebuilding of society and the overcoming of the legacy of economic chaos that was left by the previous era" (Witoelar, 1989: 9).

While neither Sekber Golkar nor SOKSI was particularly strong when Sukarno's 'Old Order' was destroyed in the mid-1960s, their structures and the concepts underpinning them shaped the political environment of the New Order (Bourchier, 1996). Under the guidance of chief ideologue General Ali Moertopo, the new regime sought to extend Sukarno's organic corporatist model to all parts of society. Moertopo promoted this corporatist structure of interest representation as part of the New Order's "national political strategy" to facilitate the participation of Indonesia's citizens in national development.[8] Although clearly inspired by Iberian and Latin American antecedents, the regime claimed that its corporatist model was based on the national ideology and was therefore uniquely Indonesian. The "national philosophy" to which Moertopo referred was Sukarno's Pancasila, which the New Order argued was an indigenous, inalienable statement of values whose authority lay beyond the realm of mere politics. As Suharto defined it in 1967, Pancasila Democracy was:

> ... [the] people's sovereignty in its spirit and integration with other basic principles. This means that exercising democratic rights must be in line with responsibility to the [sic] God Almighty in accordance with one's religion; it must highly respect humanity in accordance with human dignity; it must guarantee and strengthen national unity; and it must lead to the realisation of social justice. It is based on the idea of family principle (*kekeluargaan*) and mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) (cited in Lubis, 1993: 174).

The New Order described Pancasila Democracy as a product of "the history of [Indonesia's] own society — a pre-colonial, pre-Independence history which is truly Indonesian" (Mashuri, 1977: 34). In the words of Moertopo:

> Pancasila is [sic] the fundamental norms to be carried out by the nation and the State; the New Order is the attitude of the Indonesian people in order to apply those norms correctly [sic] (Moertopo, 1972: 4).

This meant that even "the law itself" was considered "subordinate to the moral ideals embodied in Pancasila" in New Order Indonesia (Moertopo, 1972: 20), as it had indeed been under Guided Democracy.

The corporatisation of Indonesian society was completed between 1971 and 1975, a period characterised by the "politics of fusion" (Reeve, 1985). In these few years, the regime undertook a number of sweeping political reforms, establishing the functional group organisation (Golongan Karya, Golkar) as its political vehicle and forcing the remaining non-Communist political parties to amalgamate into the Indonesian Democratic Party (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, PDI) and the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP). The new government applied a 'floating mass' policy, under which Indonesians were permitted to engage politically only at election time, ostensibly so that they could devote their energies to development. It also formed 'functional groups' for labour, peasants, fishers, youth and women which were expected to further the developmentalist interests of the state rather than the particularistic interests of their constituencies (Reeve, 1985). As part of this process, the labour movement was almost completely restructured along authoritarian, corporatist lines. By the early 1970s, the surviving moderate and conservative trade unions had been replaced by a single trade union federation designed to serve the national interest, with its objectives and programs expressed in terms of economic development rather than the particularistic interests of trade union members (Moertopo, 1975; Sukarno MPA, 1979).

Although the functional groups represented in the New Order system were far broader than the union-employer association-government triumvirate that characterises corporatist industrial relations systems worldwide, labour nonetheless represented a key focus for the New Order's corporatist strategy (Ford, 1999). Moertopo and others like him argued that under Sukarno's so-called Old Order, organised labour had eschewed its socio-economic responsibilities in favour of a divisive political unionism in which the interests of political parties were prioritised over the national interest and members' needs (Soekarno MPA, 1984). The solution to this untenable situation was, Moertopo claimed, to ensure that trade unions, like other functional groups, were structurally independent from political parties (Moertopo, 1974: 73–6).

The shift from political to economic unionism was achieved by replacing the multiple trade union federations of the Sukarno period with a single national federation to which all unionised workers were to belong.

Although centrist and conservative trade unions were never formally dissolved, they were effectively disbanded when an agreement to establish the All-Indonesia Labour Federation (Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, FBSI) was signed on 20 February 1973 (Soekarno MPA, 1984: 16–19). The new trade union federation was to be a 'partner' in the implementation of Pancasila Labour Relations. Accordingly it would act both as a channel for workers' aspirations and to facilitate "workers' participation in national undertakings" (Moertopo, 1974: 23).

FBSI and its successors were required to translate the government's agenda into initiatives that focused on supporting national development rather than the individual or collective interests of its members. From its inception, the New Order had sought legitimacy through promises of economic prosperity and political stability, explicitly positioning its development programs as the means by which a Pancasila state was to be achieved. The government's development priorities were reflected in the stated aims of the institutions of New Order industrial relations and in the language in which the goals of those institutions were couched. Publications such as the Department of Manpower's Industrial Relations Handbook (*PPHIP*, 1993) signalled the importance of development, modernisation and stability in the New Order's approach to industrial relations. This commitment to development was a consistent theme of Pancasila Industrial Relations rhetoric and practice from the time of its inclusion in the 1974 Seminar Resolution in which the term Pancasila Industrial Relations was coined (cited in Djumialdji and Soedjono, 1982: 109). In practice, the government's developmentalist approach was given form by limiting the presence of trade unions almost completely to blue-collar secondary industries and by curtailing the ability of workers to exercise their labour rights.

As Hadiz (1997: 59–83) has chronicled in his work on the origins of New Order labour relations, the establishment of FBSI was the culmination of efforts by the military, government officials and trade unionists who had survived the transition to the New Order. The initial proposal for the 'renovation' of the labour movement was put forward at a seminar sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), a foundation associated with the German Social Democratic Party, in October 1971. A few months later, in May 1972, a formal resolution called the Joint Declaration (*Ikrar Bersama*) was passed, followed by a Declaration of Unity on 20 February 1973. A Committee of Six was formed to give shape to the Declaration of Unity, which outlined

plans to form a single trade union federation, and FBSI's constitution was completed by 11 March 1973 (Soekarno MPA, 1984: 21). Exactly a year later, FBSI was recognised as the only legal trade union organisation in Indonesia.[9]

The formation of FBSI laid the foundation for the formal establishment of Pancasila Labour Relations, which occurred at the National Seminar on Pancasila Labour Relations held in Jakarta in December 1974. The seminar was attended by representatives of employers, the bureaucracy, trade unions and universities. 'Guidance' was provided to the participants by President Suharto, Ali Moertopo and Subroto, the Minister for Manpower, Transmigration and Co-operatives, who stressed that the implementation of Pancasila Labour Relations signalled the rejection of 'foreign models' that emphasised the inherently antagonistic nature of labour relations because that they were incompatible with the national character. Yet, while the concept of Pancasila Industrial Relations was firmly rooted in Moertopo's organic corporatist vision, it was also shaped by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and other non-Communist international organisations driven by the Cold War agendas of Western democracies. The role played by the FES was particularly influential, ensuring that the new trade union federation, along with various other elements of Indonesia's new industrial relations system, was modelled at least in part on the West German system.

FBSI initially consisted of 22 member trade unions organised along industry lines. These represented private sector employees working in the formal sectors of agriculture and plantations; oil, gas and mining; cigarettes and tobacco; food and beverages; textiles and clothing; forestry; printing and publishing; pharmacy and chemicals; metals and ceramics; machine and equipment assembly; rubber and leather; electronics; construction; commerce, banking and insurance; tourism; maritime workers; seafarers; inland transportation; river, lake and ferry transportation; air transportation; and health. The Indonesian Teachers' Association (Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia, PGRI) — the only trade union still representing government employees — left the federation shortly after it was formed. Although now entirely based in the private sector, the new sectoral trade unions continued to represent the labour aristocracy in a society where only some 750,000 workers were employed in large- and medium-scale manufacturing from a total labour force of some 39 million people when Suharto came to power (Manning, 1998: 55–6).

The more powerful of FBSI's member unions retained some influence in capital-intensive industries long into the New Order. However, the face of trade unionism as a whole changed quickly and dramatically with the advent of export-oriented industrialisation. Light manufacturing had been a low priority during the oil boom of the 1970s, a period in which employment was characterised by slow growth in agricultural employment and high growth in the urban informal sector. The shift to export-oriented production in the 1980s after the collapse of international oil prices meant that the labour-intensive light manufacturing sector began to grow very rapidly (Hill, 2000). Manufacturing employment increased dramatically in Java and the Outer Islands, with wood products and the textile, clothing and footwear industries accounting for just under two-thirds of all employment growth in large- and medium-scale manufacturing between 1986 and 1993 (Manning, 1998: 108). As a result of this policy, manufacturing workers came to represent a much larger proportion of the population in the urban centres of Java and Sumatra than in the rest of Indonesia.

By 1999 manufacturing employment accounted for 11.5 million people, some 13 per cent of the total number of employed persons in Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2004). This shift in the union membership base from skilled and quite highly educated workers in heavy industry to a low-skilled workforce in garments and footwear and other kinds of light manufacturing dealt a double blow to the Indonesian labour movement. On the one hand, the new growth areas were traditionally poorly unionised and offered workers extremely low wages and little job security. Furthermore, although most workers had finished high school, they acquired few of the skills required for organising work in the course of their education. On the other hand, the demands of export-oriented production, coupled with broader socio-political pressures, led to the suppression of labour activism in the mid-1980s under the new Minister for Manpower Admiral Sudomo (1983–88).

Along with an effective ban on strikes, one of the main outcomes of Minister for Manpower Sudomo's punitive approach towards organised labour was the restructuring of FBSI. In 1985 the federation lost its last vestiges of power when it was replaced by the All-Indonesia Workers' Union (Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, SPSI). FBSI's remaining 21 member unions were thereby replaced within SPSI by nine divisions representing workers in agriculture and plantations;

metals, electronics and machines; textiles and garments; tourism, food and beverages; pharmacy and health; chemicals, energy and mining; trade, banking and insurance; construction and forestry; and transportation. The creation of SPSI marked a nadir in the history of organised labour in Indonesia. Although FBSI had been quite firmly under government control, individuals within some of its member unions, most notably the Metal, Electronics and Machinery Workers' Union (Serikat Pekerja Logam, Elektronik dan Mesin, SP-LEM), had continued to focus on promoting member interests. Although many of those individuals remained personally committed to a Social-Democratic understanding of trade unionism after the formation of SPSI, their ability to implement that understanding was severely curtailed. The one-union policy forced trade unionists who were committed to more substantive forms of trade union engagement to either leave SPSI or work within the new structure.

Subsequent Ministers for Manpower, Cosmas Batubara (1988–93), a former student activist, and his businessman successor Abdul Latief (1993–98) took quite different approaches to the role of trade unions within Pancasila Industrial Relations.[10] However, both implemented policies that reflected a newfound desire on behalf of the regime for Indonesia to be seen as a supporter of workers' rights and a full, participating member of the ILO. Partly in response to international pressure, the New Order's explicit commitment to a single trade union ended in 1993 when SPSI was again restructured as a federation of industrial unions called the Federation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, FSPSI). In the course of the restructure, SPSI's nine departments were transformed into 14 autonomous sector unions, namely construction and public works; woodworking and forestry; trade, banking and insurance; publishing and printing; tourism; food, beverages and cigarettes; chemicals, energy and mining; metals, electronics and machinery; textiles and leather; transportation; seamen; agriculture and horticulture; pharmacy; and health. A year later, Minister for Manpower Latief passed Ministerial Regulation No.01/MEN/1994 on Trade Unions at Company Level, which allowed enterprise unions in workplaces where no SPSI unit existed.

Yet despite these apparently significant policy shifts, the government continued to assert a narrow definition of trade unionism and to deny workers the right to form alternative trade unions beyond the

factory. SPSI thus remained the only trade union permitted to participate in the tripartite committees and mechanisms that lay at the heart of Pancasila Industrial Relations, including the Disputes Resolution Committee, the National Tripartite Cooperative Committee and the National Wage Council.[11] As far as the New Order was concerned, the spirit, if not the letter, of the one-union policy remained in place. It was not until after Suharto's resignation in May 1998 that these legislative and policy barriers to independent trade unionism were finally abolished.

2

By Workers, For Workers

The immense changes that took place in the structure of the Indonesian trade union movement over the course of the twentieth century did not occur in an ideological vacuum, nor were they simply a product of the short-term political imperatives of successive governments. They represented the rise and fall of an ideological framework in which trade unions were part of a broader struggle for a better society, a framework that came to be replaced under the New Order by a much more conservative understanding of trade unions as an apolitical tool of national development prepared to subordinate their members' interests to those of the nation as a whole.

Despite the regime's claims to the contrary, the terms and ideas used by the New Order to describe its labour institutions did not originate in Indonesia itself but in the European labour debates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although Indonesian trade unionists and party members drew on concepts ranging from anarcho-syndicalism to Catholic corporatism, the most important of Western influences on educated Indonesians generally — and labour intellectuals in particular — were Leninist and Social-Democratic thought. Even in the late twentieth century, the thinking of Indonesian governments and labour activists with regard to non-worker labour intellectuals was still informed by debates between Leninists and the so-called 'Revisionists' over the purpose, nature and composition of trade unions. It is to these debates, then, that we must first turn in order to understand the conceptual foundations against which NGOs and student groups positioned themselves in their attempt to reinvigorate the organised labour movement.

The History of an Idea

When considering questions of labour and labour organising, Indonesia's political elite drew heavily on Leninist thought and its place in long-running debates about the role of intellectuals within the Marxist tradition.[1] The most significant site for this debate was the exchange between Lenin and his opponents in Germany and Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Connor, 1968: xv–xxi). The terms of the debate were set in Eduard Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism* (1899) and Lenin's *What is to be Done?* (1902). Should Socialism be achieved through evolution, based on the growing strength of trade unions and workers' participation in parliamentary democracy, or should revolutionary intellectuals utilise trade unions to free workers from the shackles of trade union consciousness?

The Social Democrats, inspired by the Revisionism of the German labour theorist Bernstein and his allies, argued that Marx's theory of revolution failed to take into account the heterogeneity of the proletariat and the tenuous link between the experience of industrial work and a yearning for Socialist production (Bernstein, 1975: 103–08). Bernstein's main criticism of revolutionary Marxist practice was aimed at tactics which, he argued, belied the fact that neither the economic preconditions for working-class emancipation nor the requisite working-class maturity had been achieved in agriculturally based economies such as that of late nineteenth-century Russia. In *Evolutionary Socialism*, Bernstein referred to the dilemma arising from the role of intellectuals in political action aimed at revolution, arguing that:

> One can overturn a government or a privileged minority, but not a nation. When the working classes do not possess very strong economic organisations of their own and have not attained, by means of education on self-governing bodies, a high degree of mental independence, the dictatorship of the proletariat means the dictatorship of club orators and writers (Bernstein, 1975: 216–19).

According to Bernstein, Socialism's ethical aims were thus best achieved through the exertion of economic and political pressure within the capitalist system and the development of 'trade union consciousness' without the involvement of a vanguard party or the necessity of revolution (Bernstein, 1975: 140–1).

Lenin rejected this interpretation, arguing that trade union consciousness did not reflect the scientific nature of Marxism and that the

spontaneous protests of the proletariat against capitalism could not be equated with or bring about the revolution. The spontaneity to which Lenin referred is "the spontaneity of those workers who were carried away by the arguments that a kopek added to a ruble was worth more than any socialism or politics" (Lenin, 1968: 43). In other words, trade unionists naturally focus on economic rather than political concerns. Rejecting a critique of the lack of rank-and-file strength in the Russian trade union movement, Lenin argued that intervention from revolutionary intellectuals was therefore vital to the achievement of Socialist consciousness:

> There has never been too much ... "pushing on from outside"; on the contrary, there has so far been all too little of it in our movement, for we have been stewing too assiduously in our own juice; we have bowed far too slavishly to the elementary "economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government" (Lenin, 1968: 66).

Socialist consciousness is therefore something to be introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without, not something arising spontaneously within trade unions or through the cultivation of trade union consciousness (Lenin, 1968: 45).

For Lenin, the revolutionary intellectual was an outsider who transformed trade union consciousness into revolutionary consciousness in order to overthrow capitalism and establish a dictatorship of the proletariat under the guidance of a 'vanguard party' informed by the principles of Scientific Socialism. For Social Democrats, by contrast, Socialist ideals could be achieved by evolutionary, democratic means as workers gained organisational experience and the confidence and skills to participate more fully in society through their involvement in democratic trade unions. Yet despite those differences, the analyses of Lenin and the Revisionists were based on a common understanding: that intellectuals involved in the labour movement were inherently different from the workers they sought to mobilise. It is the legacy of this shared concept of the labour intellectual — and the regime's reading of Indonesia's own labour history — that shaped the labour movement in New Order Indonesia.

Leninism and Revisionism in the Indonesian Vocabulary

The language of Leninism and Revisionism entered the Indonesian vocabulary by way of Dutch Socialists living in the Indies in the

1910s and early 1920s. This group included Henk Sneevliet, who had been involved in both the Revisionist and radical splinters of the Dutch Socialist Party before he came to the Indies in 1913 (McVey, 1965). The Dutch labour intellectuals resident in the colony strongly influenced Indonesians like Semaun, a young railway worker who became an influential trade unionist and member of Sarekat Islam and the Communist Union of the Indies (Perserikatan Komunis di Hindia, PKH), the two main nationalist organisations of the period (Semaoen, 1920; Semaun, 1966). Trade union leaders like Semaun:

> ... shaped the ideological tone of trade union meetings, rallies and magazines, as they sought to educate ordinary workers to see their grievances over wages and conditions in the wider context of the international labour movement and the anti-colonial struggle (Ingleson, 2001: 92–3).

The European heritage of the ideas they promoted were explicit: at a meeting of Communist Union and Sarekat Islam branches in 1921 attended by some 1,500 people, portraits of Marx, Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Lenin and Trotsky were hung alongside those of Indonesian heroes in the struggle against the Dutch (McVey, 1965: 113–14).

In the 1910s and early 1920s, debates about orthodoxy in the Indies were couched in terms of the dichotomy between revolutionary and evolutionary Socialism, particularly in regard to Semaun's stance on a range of issues, which Ruth McVey (1965: 27–8) argues "sounded more like Revisionist than Orthodox Marxism". Even under the 'bloc within' strategy through which the Communists sought to work with other nationalist groups, members of the PKI remained convinced of its value as a vanguard party. By 1924, PKI Chair Aliarcham was advocating an end to attempts to organise the peasantry, a renewed focus on revolutionary trade unions and a smaller, more disciplined party (McVey, 1965: 97).

Although the PKI was all but destroyed in 1926–27, many texts written in the 1930s about international and Indonesian Socialism continued to be framed within the Leninist-Revisionist debates (Sutherland, 1968: 114). As the Communist leader Njoto recalled in a 1964 speech reflecting on the late colonial period, besides volumes by Marx, Engels, Plekhanov, Lenin, Stalin, Liebknecht, Luxemburg and Dimitrov, "the books of the Social-Democratic parties and those dealing with the trends in thinking of other opportunists were also imported into Indonesia", including works by Bakunin, Kautsky, Bukharin and Trotsky, and Dutch Social Democrats such as

Henriette Roland Holst (Njoto, 1965: 3–4).[2] These texts influenced "virtually the whole of the intelligentsia" and, as a consequence, a "socialist-Communist vocabulary became the common property of the entire nationalist elite" in the Indies (Anderson, 1966: 102).

After Independence, the vocabulary of Leninism and Lenin's Social-Democratic opponents remained influential in shaping political discourse. One indication of the continuing currency of the debate was the inclusion of Revisionism in the political dictionaries of the time. For example, in a political encyclopaedia of 1955, Revisionism was defined as:

> A school of Socialism that deviates from Marx's teachings about the necessity of revolution to change the structure of society. Revisionism desires an evolutionary path. With this school (which was led by Bernstein), Socialism split into two: the evolutionary and the revolutionary (Sastrawiria and Wirasutisna, 1955: 16–17).

The number of works translated into Indonesian between 1945 and 1965 is further evidence of the currency of both Leninism and Revisionism in Indonesia during the Sukarno years. Books published included translations of *What is to be Done?* (Lenin, 1957a) and *Marxism and Revisionism* (Lenin, 1957b) — complete with a glossary of terms — along with the Marxist Leninist Institute's Foreword to *Against Revisionism* (Lenin, 1957b), which gave an extensive overview of the debate between Lenin and the Revisionists and the circumstances in which it occurred. Such volumes were supplemented by translated and Indonesian-authored volumes on the history of Socialism in Europe. These included works like A. Werbin's account of Soviet trade unions (n.d.) and Soemardjo's history of European Socialism from the nineteenth century to 1914 (n.d.). Several volumes about Socialism in Indonesia were also published, many of which included chapters on Leninist and Revisionist thought (for example, Abdulgani, 1963; Djaja, 1946; Juti, 1963; Proleter Indonesia, 1946).

More specific debates about the relationship between parties and trade unions were understandably sharpest within the group that saw themselves as Marxian parties, most notably the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI); the Proletarian Party (Partai Murba), the Indonesian Nationalist Party (Partai Nasionalis Indonesia, PNI), the Indonesian Socialist Party (Partai Sosialis Indonesia, PSI) and the Indonesian Labour Party (Partai Buruh Indonesia, PBI). As Tedjasukmana, former leader of the Indonesian Labour Party and Minister for Labour in 1951–53 and 1955–56, observed:

> Marxian Socialists in Indonesia can be divided into those who are convinced that Socialism and democracy are one, because dictatorship makes a mockery of Socialism, and those who accept the interpretation and elaboration of Socialism by Lenin (Tedjasukmana, 1958: 47).

As this observation suggests, Tedjasukmana and his colleagues in the PBI supported the Social-Democratic position. The PKI and the Proletarian Party imagined themselves at least in part as Leninist vanguard parties, while the Nationalist and Socialist Parties explicitly adopted contradictory combinations of Leninist and Social-Democratic principles.[3]

Conservative voices, whose perspectives were later very influential in New Order thinking and rhetoric about labour relations, were also part of the debate about the nature and purpose of political parties and their relationship with trade unions. S.K. Trimurti, in her more radical years during the Revolutionary period, accused these conservatives of Revisionism:

> There are voices amongst the workers who say that workers should not be involved in politics; that workers must only struggle in the socio-economic field. They say that workers must only struggle for improvements in their own conditions ... [and that] socio-politics should be left to the politicians. Such suggestions are false, and very dangerous ... such a struggle does not oppose the principles of capitalism, and cannot destroy capitalism .... The capitalists spread their agents amidst the masses of workers so that they influence workers to relinquish their political struggle (Trimurti, 1948: 36–7).

The 'Conservatism' that Trimurti identified referred to the variants of Revisionism taken up by many religious political figures and trade unionists in the 1950s and 1960s rather than a unitarist position that recognised no difference in the class interests of workers and employers.

The convergence of religious convictions and Socialism was nowhere better illustrated than in a speech by Prime Minister and later leader of the Emergency Government of 1948, Sjafrudin Prawiranegara, published in book form by a Yogyakarta-based Muslim weekly *Indonesia Raya*. In a section in which he compared Marxism and religious Socialism, Prawiranegara declared that:

> To be honest, I am amazed to see that amongst the Communists and Socialists of Indonesia there are many who embrace Islam or Christianity. What amazes me more is that they are not just

> casual Muslims or Christians, but Muslims and Christians who perform their religious duties and prostrate themselves before God, perhaps more diligently and more fervently than other Muslims and Christians (Prawiranegara, 1948: 7).

In such a context, it is entirely logical that authors writing from a religious perspective adopted the terms of the debate between Lenin and the Revisionists.

The Protestant authors of the 1954 volume entitled "The Problem of Strikes" (*Masalah Mogok Kerdja*) were among those religious thinkers who applauded Revisionist principles. The authors quoted the Dutch Socialist Pieter Troelstra, who in 1908 wrote that "trade unions know that their work is actually done within the limits of capitalism; their duty is not to destroy employers, but to get as much as possible from them". Having noted that Christians agreed with Troelstra's sentiments, they then directly invoked Bernstein:

> In a company, a strike is like a dispute between members of a household designed to change a number of aspects in the relationship between the entrepreneur and the workers and does not have the objective of destroying the basis of the relationship. Strikes break the work contract with the intention of improving upon the existing basis of the society (*Masalah Mogok Kerdja*, 1954: 24).

The Catholic Information Service (Badan Penerangan Katolik) in its 1949 volume entitled "Communists and Trade Unions" (*Kaum Komunis dan Serikat2 Sekerdja*) also invoked the rhetoric of Revisionism. Its authors criticised the Communists for interfering with the operation of trade unions, arguing that trade unions were designed to achieve higher wages, shorter working hours and firmer guarantees of work — purposes that were "unrelated to either religion or politics". They argued that if these "true" purposes were fulfilled, "the community need not be worried about the development of trade unions". According to the authors, the risk lay when trade unionism and politics mix, leading to a change in trade union objectives. In such situations, the strike was no longer an economic tool but a political one (BPK, 1949: 10).

Trade Union Perspectives

Regardless of their position on the ideological spectrum or their actual practices, trade union-authored labour histories written in the

1940s, 1950s and 1960s all claimed that they had no direct links with political parties (for example, Margo, 1960; Sutadi, 1960). Even the leaders of the trade union federation closely associated with the PKI rejected the party's claims that it played a vanguard role in trade union affairs (SOBSI, n.d.). For example, a 1947 Central Organisation of Indonesian Trade Unions (Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, SOBSI) publication, entitled "The National Revolution and 1 May" began with pictures of Marx, Lenin and Stalin and included a description of conditions in Soviet Russia and a list of SOBSI's demands, but the PKI was not mentioned once (Adisoemarta, 1947). Likewise, the Communist Party was not mentioned in SOBSI's 18-page 1960 list of demands (SOBSI, 1960). The constitutions of SOBSI's member-unions also emphasised the 'non-party' nature of the federation (for example, Serikat Buruh Gula, 1956: 13; Serikat Buruh Rokok Indonesia, 1957: 14).

In practice, SOBSI's leadership involved non-worker intellectuals, many of whom were also involved in the PKI (Elliott, 1997). In a telling example, the weakness of SOBSI's claims of independence was exposed in an incident in 1947 when the head of SOBSI's Malang Branch met with a foreign delegation that included a representative of the United States' State Department, a journalist from the *American Christian Science Monitor* (the wife of the State Department representative) and a representative of the French newspaper, *Havas*. When asked about SOBSI's relationship with political parties, Harjadi described a 'spiritual' relationship with the Communist, Socialist and Labour Parties but categorically denied that SOBSI was linked to, let alone dependent on, any of them. Later in the interview, attention turned to the role of intellectuals in SOBSI and the ideological education of workers. When asked if non-worker intellectuals could become labour leaders, Harjadi emphasised the participation of 'ordinary workers' in the SOBSI leadership. However, when the interviewer observed that those present were non-worker intellectuals, Harjadi conceded that indeed they were (Soepardi, 1947).[4]

Similarly, the All-Indonesia Workers' Congress (Kongres Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, KBSI) strenuously denied its links with the PSI (KBSI, 1956). In practice, however, those links were very strong. For example, A.K. Poeradiredja held executive positions in both the trade union and the party, which paid part or all of the salaries of KBSI organisers.[5] Its affiliated unions nevertheless adopted a strong Revisionist position and were suspicious about connections with the PSI.

According to a 1959 report by the executive of the Railway Workers' Union (Persatuan Buruh Kereta Api, PBKA), for example, KBSI had always "operated in the socio-economic field to improve the lot of its members and workers generally" and had avoided being "controlled or dominated by the ideology of a particular political Party" (PBKA, 1959: Ie–7). The PBKA itself later shifted from the Revisionist position of economic trade unionism to one more closely aligned with the Catholic corporatist position after it became closely associated with military initiatives in the Guided Democracy period, noting at its 1963 conference that unions should be partners of management working towards a common future (Elliott, 1997).

Asmara Hadi, an official from the Indonesian Printers' Union (Sarekat Buruh Pertjetakan Indonesia, SBPI), another union with links to the Socialist Party, presented an equally strong case against political unionism, using Revisionist terms to critique the influence on trade unions of political parties, particularly the Communists. In an extended treatise on this question, Hadi claimed that he was not averse to ideological unionism but argued that trade unions must be careful not to become "political footballs" or "instruments of a political party" (Hadi, 1952: 158). He concluded that:

> Incidental cooperation to achieve a particular objective is, of course, permissible but trade unions must be very careful not to give up their freedom, they must be on guard so that political parties do not intrude on the domain of the labour movement and must also be careful that they do not become involved in quarrels between political parties (Hadi, 1952: 157).

Hadi rejected Lenin's call for Communists to become involved in all trade unions because he believed Communists did "not allow the labour movement to choose its own path" (Hadi, 1952: 67). Citing the example of European and American trade unions that viewed control by a Communist party (or, indeed, any party) with suspicion, Hadi argued that trade unions are "24-carat class organisations", whose membership should comprise only workers (Hadi, 1952: 3–4). On the question of individual intellectuals' involvement in trade unions, Hadi again compared Indonesia with Europe and America, where he claimed that it was "seldom true that non-workers hold a role in trade unions". He argued that in Indonesia, by contrast, high levels of illiteracy meant that non-worker intellectuals necessarily held important positions in the trade union leadership, as he himself had done in the

printers' union (Hadi, 1952: 18–19). Hadi noted that such a situation was not desirable because of the gap between the life experiences of intellectuals and workers:

> Only leaders who emerge from the workers themselves can gain and maintain the trust of the workers. There are exceptions, but in general we cannot hope that non-worker intellectuals can truly absorb the life of the workers into their own lives, and that is the primary skill required of the trade union leadership (Hadi, 1952: 19).

Again emphasising this point when describing his understanding of the relationship between the labour movement and political parties, he argued that "no matter how great their love for the workers, and irrespective of the fact that their ultimate objectives are the same as the ultimate objectives of the labour movement", the point of departure of political parties was different from that of the labour movement (Hadi, 1952: 157).

Muslim and Christian trade unionists also engaged in these debates. For example, the 1964 history of the Indonesian labour movement written by the Indonesian Association of Muslim Unions (Gabungan Sarekat Buruh Islam Indonesia, GASBIINDO) emphasised the parallels between the Muslim position and other religious approaches to labour relations, parallels made explicit in a section that dealt with Marx, Islam, Christianity and Gandhi. The bulk of the section of the book that dealt with this question was devoted to Marx. The authors declared that in Islam "the class struggle proposed in Marxist analysis cannot be condoned" and that the Islamic belief that social problems should be solved humanely was "a strong indication of the means by which labour problems should be solved in this modern era". The authors concluded by saying that "this seems the case too in Christian and Gandhian teachings" (Pengurus Besar GASBIINDO, 1964: 26–7). Yet while Muslim unions denounced Marxism, like most others in post-Independence Indonesia, they were "guided by socialist ideas and pursuing socialist aims", albeit in their case only "to the extent that these ideas and aims are derived from the Qur'an" (Tedjasukmana, 1958: 47).

The Genesis of Organic Corporatism

As noted in the previous chapter, the genesis of the model for society proposed by Suharto's New Order lay in the ideological formulations

of Guided Democracy (Reeve, 1985: 222–5). In the labour sphere, achievement of this vision relied on the eradication of references to class and class differences and on the domestication of organised labour. At its heart was the concept of *karyawan*, a Sanskrit term derived from the root word *karya*, meaning purposeful activity. In the 1960s the military promoted *karyawan* as a replacement for *buruh*, the term for 'worker' that had come to be mired in the connotations of class conflict (Leclerc, 1972). As defined by the military-sponsored Central Organisation of Indonesian Socialist Workers (Sentral Organisasi Karyawan Sosialis Indonesia, SOKSI), the term *karyawan* referred to "every person who gives their constructive effort to the people", regardless of the kind of work undertaken (SOKSI, 1964: 11). According to this SOKSI document, class conflict was no longer necessary in Indonesia because (invoking Marx) the Revolution has been achieved.[6] In the *karyawan* society embodied in the concept of Guided Democracy, there was:

> ... no longer a basis for the relationship between labour and bosses.... There is a differentiation of function between one *karyawan* and another; both give the fruits of their *karya* to Indonesian progress. The dividing line between workers and bosses is replaced with cooperation and unity based on collective deliberation and consensus between the *karyawan* who carry out the work and the *karyawan* who lead them (SOKSI, 1964: 11).

Such language characterised the New Order's version of organic corporatism, which was also heavily influenced by Catholic social theory. Many of the ideas proposed by the architect of New Order corporatism General Ali Moertopo drew on the work of the staff of the Jakarta-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, many of whom had studied under the Dutch Jesuit priest Father Jopie Beek in the 1960s in the Catholic Monthly Caderisation program (Kaderisasi Sebulan, Kasbul) (Aditjondro, 1997; Bourchier, 1996). It was also in the Guided Democracy period (1959–66) that the first systematic attempts were made by bureaucrats and the military to differentiate Indonesia's Pancasila Democracy from both Liberalism and Communism. However, these influences did not fully account for the substance or rhetoric of New Order trade unionism, which also continued to reflect the influences of Revisionism.

Accommodating Revisionist Principles in the New Order

In the early years of the New Order, Ali Moertopo took a strong personal interest in shaping the institutions of labour corporatism in an attempt to reform the trade union movement while maintaining at least some international credibility. In doing so, he tempered his corporatist vision for Indonesian labour by recognising workers' collective right to pursue their own socio-economic interests, rejecting political unionism rather than seeking to totally subsume trade unions within the state project. Central to his project was the establishment of the All-Indonesia Labour Federation (Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, FBSI), which he envisaged as a strong, single trade union federation oriented to the "goals and ambitions" of the nation as a whole (Moertopo, 1974: 10–12). When articulating his position, Moertopo argued that:

> In the past, the Indonesian labour movement was divided and difficult to unify because of ideological differences between its leaders, who emphasised the political struggle and neglected the struggle to improve the socio-economic welfare of its members .... The FBSI's struggle emphasises the socio-economic struggle to improve workers' welfare, and the achievement of better working conditions and social guarantees. In doing so, FBSI is returning the function of the labour movement to that of [a] labour union rather than of [a] political organisation (Moertopo, 1980: 32–3).

Thus although the limits of trade unionism were ultimately defined by labour's place in the New Order's corporatist system of interest representation, New Order doctrine concerning trade unionism also reflected the Social-Democratic convictions of non-Communist labour activists and their international supporters.

While the left of the international labour movement was effectively excluded from Indonesia after Suharto deposed Sukarno from the presidency, the centre and right of that movement continued to engage with officials and trade unionists throughout the New Order. Both the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) maintained considerable influence with the Department of Manpower under the New Order. Agus Sudono, who was the head of GASBIINDO and later

of FBSI, had a leadership position in the ICFTU's Asian section from 1958 and became a member of the ICFTU executive in 1969 (Soekarno MPA, 1984: 47). In addition, international trade unions were permitted to provide technical assistance so long as they worked with the official trade union. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) of Germany and the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS, formerly AAFLI) were the most influential Solidarity Support Organisations in Indonesia under the New Order. Both entered Indonesia in a Cold War context, hoping to prevent the spread of Communism, in AAFLI's case, with support from the United States Central Intelligence Agency (Sims, 1992). FES was particularly influential in the early 1970s, when its preferred model of trade unionism shaped the All-Indonesia Labour Federation (Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, FBSI), established in 1973. FES also hosted the 1974 seminar in which Pancasila Industrial Relations was introduced. These and other international organisations championed the cause of the moderate Socialist trade union leaders — the traditional proponents of the Revisionist position — who were closely involved in the New Order's restructuring of the labour movement.

Equally prominent in the early New Order period were the domestic leaders of the religiously based trade unions, which either adopted a conservative reading of Revisionism or argued that workers' interests were best protected within an harmonious employment relationship predicated on Muslim or Christian morality. One of the most influential proponents of this conservative version of the Revisionist position in the early 1970s was Agus Sudono (Sudono, 1985). Like Moertopo, Sudono believed that political unionism would only disappear if they could develop a strong, united labour movement focused on the socio-economic needs of workers (Sudono, 1977: 42–3), albeit for very different reasons. Sudono defined trade unions in indisputably Social-Democratic terms:

> A trade union is a permanent, democratic organisation that is formed voluntarily from, by and for workers to improve the protection afforded to them in their work, to improve their working conditions through collective bargaining and their life situation, and as a means of expressing workers' opinions about issues that arise in the community (Sudono, 1979: 26).

Sudono's Revisionist leanings were also reflected in his repeated insistence on the difference between the "ideological, long-term, socio-

political struggle" of political organisations and the "real, short-term, socio-economic struggle" of trade unions (Sudono, 1977: 66; 1979: 21).

As a result of the forced marriage of these influences, trade unions acquired a double identity in New Order labour rhetoric. On one hand, they were part of Moertopo's Pancasila Democracy, a model in which society was envisaged as an organic, corporatist whole (Bourchier, 1996). On the other hand, official prescriptions deemed that trade unions must be 'by, for and of workers', concentrating on workers' own concerns rather than serving as a tool of a revolutionary party. The fusion of the organic corporatist and Revisionist positions occurred because both Moertopo and Sudono were concerned about the ongoing influence of 'outside forces', particularly political parties. Sudono reconciled his Revisionist principles with Moertopo's exclusionary corporatist vision for labour by arguing that trade unions' socio-economic aims could only be achieved in a developing country context if the labour movement became a partner in economic development (Sudono, 1977: 41). Meanwhile, for Moertopo, and in contrast to the European Social-Democrats, the goal of strong trade unionism was not evolution towards Socialism but rather the development of a relatively conflict-free relationship between employers and employees based on the rejection of class struggle (Moertopo, 1974: 13–15).

Shifts over time in the balance between corporatist and Revisionist influences were reflected in government rhetoric and in FBSI's structure and practice. Revisionist influences were initially quite strong but the corporatist elements in New Order labour policy became dominant in the early 1980s when Admiral Sudomo was Minister for Manpower. Labour corporatism reached its peak in 1985 when Sudomo abolished FBSI and its member unions, replacing them with the unitary All-Indonesia Workers' Union (Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, SPSI). Sudomo's 1985 restructure of the state-sponsored union caused considerable friction within the trade union movement between those who supported it and those who opposed it, among them Sudono. One of the most vocal supporters of SPSI was Imam Soedarwo, another founding member of FSBI who had previously been a member of the Indonesian People's Labour Association (Kesatuan Buruh Kerakyatan Indonesia, KBKI). Ultimately, Soedarwo replaced Sudono as chair of FBSI and a number of other union activists left to pursue alternative avenues of labour organising. These included Saut Aritonang, one of the founders of the Solidarity Free Trade Union (Serikat Buruh Merdeka-Setia Kawan, SBM-SK), the first of the 'alternative' unions established

in the 1990s, and Tarmono, who established one of Indonesia's first labour NGOs. The trend towards exclusionary corporatism was then partially reversed from the late 1980s when Cosmas Batubara assumed the role of Minister for Manpower, but it re-emerged in the last few years of the New Order as labour unrest increased.

The tensions between organic corporatism and Revisionist principles were clearest in the ways the New Order defined workers' obligations and interests and in its definition of workers themselves. A key tenet of organic corporatism is that society as a whole shares an overarching, indivisible interest (in Indonesia's case, national development), which all social groups strive to achieve. Within the labour sphere, this translates as meaning that the interests of workers are coterminous with those of employers and the nation and that they have an obligation to sublimate desires for their own short-term gain in order to further the national interest. By contrast, Revisionist theories of trade unionism recognise that the economic interests of workers and employers are inherently different and maintain that workers should have a right to fight for their interests. By extension, organic corporatist models consider all productive citizens to hold the same status in the nation as they all contribute to the achievement of national goals — described in Indonesian by the all-encompassing term *karyawan* — whereas Revisionist models draw a clear line between those who are workers and those who are not. Tensions between the principles of organic corporatism and Revisionism also emerged in the regime's stance towards political unionism. It is in this realm that the incorporation of Revisionist principles within the overarching framework of organic corporatism was both most problematic and had the strongest implications for trade union structures.

Workers' Obligations and Interests

The uneasy coexistence between Revisionism and the corporatist insistence that trade unions should act in the interests of the state created internal inconsistencies within the rhetoric and practice of Pancasila Industrial Relations. When FBSI was established, the separation of the interests of workers from those of management and the government, along with other principles such as the right to strike, were firmly embedded in its charter. This commitment to the representation of workers' interests remained a key theme in the official union's rhetoric throughout the New Order, even though in practice its promotion of

those interests was constrained by the political imperatives of security and national development. These conflicting understandings of SPSI's primary purpose as a tool of government or a Revisionist institution acting for workers' interests was most clearly expressed in government responses to strike actions and labour demonstrations. As Kammen (1997) observes, two apparently contradictory arguments were used by New Order officials to explain strikes. On the one hand, strikes were often described as the result of a breakdown in the labour relationship or the unstable mentality of the workers. On the other, they were attributed to organised conspiracy and subversion. Kammen argues that both these explanations served to deny workers' discontent as the former rejected conscious intent and the latter displaced agency to outsiders.

At the height of New Order labour corporatism in the early to mid-1980s, government rhetoric no longer acknowledged the discrete interests of labour and capital at all. Instead, as documented in the Department of Manpower's Industrial Relations Handbook, it argued — borrowing the language of Catholic corporatism — that all work was a "service to God, to our fellow human beings, nation and state", and employees were not merely "factors of production", but "individual people with dignity and value". According to the government, employers and employees had "the same interest" because, if the company prospered, "the welfare of all parties [could] be improved". This must be the case, it argued, because strikes and lockouts were "not compatible" with Pancasila Industrial Relations and "disagreements" were to be "solved using deliberation to reach a consensus conducted according to the family principle" (*PPHIP*, 1993: 12–13).[7] During this period, Suharto and Sudomo blamed strikes on companies' failure to treat workers properly, on SPSI's failure to adequately represent its members within the Pancasila Industrial Relations system or on third parties who claimed to act for workers.[8]

Acceptance of the right to strike — along with the Revisionist emphasis on workers' agency and hence the possibility that the interests of workers were not identical to those of employers — again became part of official rhetoric when Cosmas Batubara became Minister for Manpower in 1988. At a time when he was mounting a campaign for a leadership position within the ILO, Batubara argued that strikes were acceptable as long as they were 'normative' (concerned with matters already provided for in law) and involved only SPSI. In 1991, during the wave of strikes that marked the genesis of the alternative labour movement, Batubara and Sudono's successor as chair of SPSI,

Imam Soedarwo, were both quoted as saying that strikes were a good thing because they showed increasing awareness amongst workers, and demonstrated "to the world" that Indonesia allowed its workers to strike (*Suara Pembaruan*, 22 August 1991). Soedarwo added that "what must be considered by all parties is how to ensure that demonstrations or strikes are orderly, not influenced by outside parties, but well organised by SPSI" (*Suara Pembaruan*, 22 August 1991).

According to Soedarwo, most strikes in the early 1990s were "economic in nature, or subsistence issues, not political". He explained that these were "classical strikes" that involved "normative demands like wages, hours of work, overtime and other welfare issues" and were therefore permissible (Soedarwo, cited in Hasibuan, 1992). Batubara also defined 'acceptable strikes' in classic Revisionist terms, arguing that they were "held purely and spontaneously by workers themselves, without any interference from other parties" (Setyono, 1991). He claimed that the strikes of the early 1990s were different from the demonstrations of the early 1980s — and that the latter had not been acceptable because they had been "interfered with by other parties for personal or group interests" (cited in *Kompas*, 16 October 1991).

The military also softened its stance on strike activity in the early 1990s after labour conditions had come under scrutiny during the review of Indonesia's Most Favoured Nation status under the United States' Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), a government scheme allowing import concessions for selected developing countries. In 1993, the Military Commander of the Jakarta Area, Major-General Hendro Priyono, was reported as saying that demonstrations could be tolerated as long as they were held purely to demand improved wages. In the same speech he emphasised that demonstrations run by outsiders for their own ends were forbidden because they were not run by the official organisation that had been agreed upon (cited in *Pikiran Rakyat*, 11 August 1993). In practice, however, the military's tolerance was extremely limited. Strike actions were regularly greeted by military repression and a return to the rhetoric of Admiral Sudomo about their incompatibility with Pancasila Industrial Relations.

Even when tolerance for trade union action was at its greatest, the government continued to emphasise the shared interests of employers and employees. During the rapid growth of industrial unrest in the early to mid-1990s, the harmonious nature of the employee-employer relationship under Pancasila Industrial Relations was constantly restated in official press statements. For example, on the occasion of the 24th

anniversary of the formation of the official union, Minister for Manpower Abdul Latief told his audience that:

> Unions are part of the infrastructure of Pancasila Industrial Relations. They are not designed for confrontation, but to assist management as a partner in running the company, which, in turn, helps improve the welfare of workers and their families (*Waspada*, 22 February 1997).

Exactly the same formulation was used by the Director-General of Industrial Relations and Labour Standards at the opening of a training workshop for factory-level unions two days later (*Merdeka*, 24 February 1997) and again in a statement by Abdul Latief in the April of that year, when Parliament's consideration of Draft Manpower Law was postponed (*Republika*, 10 April 1997). This simultaneous emphasis on a conflict-free partnership between trade unions and management and recognition of the right to strike, albeit in a limited form, brought with it strong echoes of tensions between Moertopo's organic emphasis on trade unions as functional group organisations and the Revisionists' emphasis on workers' rights.

Defining the Worker

The awkward accommodation of Revisionist concepts of trade unionism within the New Order's organic corporatist structures was also clearly evident in contradictions between the form taken by the state-sponsored trade union federation and the New Order's efforts to avoid identifying the different classes of people who contributed to the organic state. In other words, the distinction between "work of the head" and "work of the hand" inherent in the structure of the official union, which focused on private sector waged workers in mostly blue-collar occupations, contradicted the government's rhetoric about the classless Pancasila society.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the conscious attempt to impose the concept of *karyawan* (a classless notion, meaning any person who performed productive work of any kind) had its roots in Sukarno's claims that Indonesia had evolved into a post-revolutionary society (SOKSI, 1964). The official attempt to impose the term *karyawan* during the Guided Democracy period, when it was promoted as a sign that the Leninist revolution had been achieved, continued with

little success during the early years of the New Order, when *karyawan* was often used interchangeably with *buruh*. The differences between *buruh*, *pekerja* and *karyawan* (the three most commonly used words to describe 'workers' in modern Indonesian) were described in a dictionary of 'development politics' published in 1970:

> *Buruh* are people who work with their *physical power* to receive WAGES, which are their primary source of income .... *Pekerja* is [a term for] someone who does something, regardless of whether it requires physical exertion (*buruh*) or other skills, such as a clerk or a doctor. *Karyawan* is a more polite term for every person who does positive and productive work [capitalisation and emphasis in the original] (Hakim *et al.*, 1970: 16).

In the same year that this dictionary was published, General Moertopo signalled the New Order's intentions to eliminate *buruh* from language and social reality, declaring that "workers and employers must go; only one class will remain, that of the *karyawan*, executing or formulating directives" (Ali Moertopo, cited in Leclerc, 1972: 77). Yet even Moertopo himself was inconsistent in the use of these terms. In the text of his address to the 1974 Seminar on Industrial Relations, for example, *karyawan*, *pekerja* and *buruh* were all used interchangeably (Moertopo, 1975).

The ongoing currency of *buruh* was also identified in a volume on Indonesian labour law published in 1976 by Iman Soepomo, an academic based at the University of Indonesia. In the volume, Soepomo felt compelled to justify his continued use of the term *buruh*. Contrasting *buruh* to *pekerja* and *karyawan*, he explained that he preferred to use *buruh* because it was a "precise" term that allowed labour law to be formulated unambiguously. *Pekerja*, he argued, was unsuitable because its meaning "is very broad, namely every person who performs work, both in an employment relationship as well as outside an employment relationship". Similarly, *karyawan*, which referred to "every person who performs *karya*, or purposeful activity which includes, but is not limited to, waged work", could not be used in contexts where different parties in the employment relationship needed to be indentified (Soepomo, 1976: 31–2).[9]

Even into the next decade, *karyawan* still found little acceptance. For example, its entry in the 1980 *Ensiklopedi Indonesia* directed the reader to *buruh*, whose entry confirmed the currency of *buruh* and the artificiality of the *karyawan* concept:

> *Buruh* Legal: every person who works for an employer and receives wages. In everyday usage, we differentiate between *buruh kantor*, or *karyawan* who work in offices; *buruh kasar*, or *karyawan* who work with their physical strength (in the past called *kuli*, *unskilled labor* [English in the original]); *buruh trampil*, workers who have skills, such as artisans, typists, etc (*Ensiklopedi Indonesia*, 1980: 557).

Attempts to impose the term *karyawan* continued until 1985, when FBSI, the full name of which was Federasi *Buruh* Seluruh Indonesia, was restructured and attempts to eliminate class connotations in the language of labour took a new turn. The naming of its replacement — Serikat *Pekerja* Seluruh Indonesia — heralded the ultimate official rejection of *buruh*. According to the National Tripartite Institute's Guidebook on Industrial Relations, *pekerja* had replaced *buruh* for the following reasons:

> The term *buruh*, which is actually only an ordinary technical term that refers to labour working for other people for wages, has developed ... some unhelpful connotations:
>
> The existence of the word *buruh* means there is a word '*majikan*' [employer/boss] implying that an unequal relationship exists between *buruh* and *majikan* and that there is a polarisation [of society] into two classes with different interests.
>
> On hearing the word *buruh* one imagines that they are a group of workers from the lower classes who work only manually. Consequently, those who work not only manually, such as those employed in administration, are reluctant to be called *buruh*.
>
> Under the influence of Marxism, *buruh* were considered a class that is always exploited by the employers/bosses. *Buruh* are also considered a class that always strives to destroy the employers/bosses in their struggle.
>
> The socialisation of Pancasila Industrial Relations requires the development of a familial atmosphere, mutual cooperation and consultation in a company. The use of the word *buruh*, which has negative connotations, does not encourage the development of a familial atmosphere, mutual cooperation and consultation in a company. Consequently, the term *buruh* must be replaced and a term must be found that reflects the spirit of Pancasila Industrial Relations.
>
> It is not an easy task to find a new term that meets these requirements. Consequently, we must return to the 1945 Constitution, our basic guide. In the 1945 Constitution in the explanation of Article Two, the following is stated: "what is meant by groups

> are bodies such as cooperatives, *serikat pekerja* (workers' unions) and other collective bodies".
>
> It is clear here that the 1945 Constitution uses the term '*pekerja*' to mean *buruh*. Consequently, it has been agreed that the word '*pekerja*' be used as a replacement for the word '*buruh*' because it has a strong legal basis (*PPHIP*, 1987: 45).

Unlike *karyawan*, the term *pekerja* quickly became accepted as the official term for workers, although its use was largely confined to government bureaucrats and trade union administrators. The dichotomy in its usage was very clear in newspapers published in the 1980s and 1990s, when only articles citing official sources regularly used *pekerja*.

Towards the end of the New Order, the term *pekerja* began to absorb some of the meanings originally invested in *karyawan*. In 1996, on the occasion of the celebration of Indonesian Workers' Day, for example, President Suharto described the "great difference" between *buruh* and *pekerja*. His speech was reported in the Department of Manpower newsletter as follows:

> '*Buruh*' work simply to get wages from another person, without becoming spiritually involved in their work. Besides that, the term '*buruh*' has connotations of being opposed to employer. '*Buruh*' also has connotations of just carrying out orders as a tool in the production process.
>
> In contrast to *buruh*, *pekerja* have a spiritual link with, and strong professional pride in, their work, in its planning, execution, supervision and control .... Furthermore, *pekerja* can develop a career ... because the group of *pekerja* is not limited to those who execute tasks, but includes [professional] staff and directors and company boards, who work together to achieve results ("Kemitraan Dalam Hubungan Industrial", 1996: 8).

In practice, however, *pekerja* was primarily used to describe the performers rather than the planners of work. Meanwhile, the term *karyawan* eventually became part of the popular lexicon. Ironically, in the process its meaning narrowed to become a euphemism for blue-collar workers and the lower ranks of the white-collar workforce. The ongoing currency of *buruh*, which had become the term of choice among independent labour activists, was later recognised in the drafting of labour legislation passed in 2000, when parliament decided to amend references to *pekerja* to read *pekerja/buruh* and references to *serikat pekerja* to *serikat pekerja/serikat buruh*.

Tensions around Political Unionism

Corporatist and Revisionist ideas about trade unions were most inconsistent in the government's rejection of political unionism and its closely related stance on 'non-worker outsiders'. In practice, the links between the state-sponsored union and the government's political vehicle Golkar were extremely strong throughout the New Order period. Many in the official trade union's central leadership were members of Golkar with no background in trade union affairs; retired bureaucrats and retired members of the military were also represented at lower levels of the union (Hikam, 1995: 232–3). In some situations, these links were freely admitted by trade unionists. For example, in 1993 some SPSI representatives told a delegation from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) that the involvement of retired military personnel in the trade union was not a cause for concern because army officers who retire at the age of 55 naturally seek to be involved in other activities, including trade union organising (ICFTU, 1993: 6). Similarly, in the following year when an independent labour activist criticised the 'dropping' of Golkar officials into SPSI, a member of SPSI's central board commented that it was quite reasonable if a number of SPSI officials came from Indonesia's largest social-political organisation (*Media Indonesia*, 4 March 1994). The existence of non-worker trade unionists and a trade union controlled by the party of power presents no logical difficulty for an organic corporatist system, which, in many ways, is simply a conservative mirror of a Leninist dictatorship of the proletariat. However, both elements are incompatible with Revisionist logic because Revisionist doctrine demands a trade union by, for and of workers. Such a union may be linked to a political party but it cannot be subordinate to that party.

The incompatibility between Revisionist labour doctrine and party-controlled unions in part explains why New Order rhetoric about trade unionism focused on the official union's separation from Golkar. Hadiz (1997) has argued, following Reeve (1985), that FBSI's formal independence from Golkar was a result of tensions in the late 1960s and early 1970s between its predecessor Sekber Golkar and non-Communist trade union leaders over the international representation of Indonesian labour. However, the New Order's strong and sustained emphasis on the importance of the separation between party and union also drew heavily on Revisionist logic about the negative impact that direct links with political parties have on trade unions. As SPSI Chair Imam Soedarwo proclaimed in the mid-1990s:

> It must be emphasised that SPSI is an organisation that belongs to the workers, not to political parties or other political forces (*Kompas*, 13 May 1994).

This insistence that trade unions must be independent from political parties underpinned the formation of FBSI and all its later incarnations.

The Revisionist premise about the separation of the political and economic elements of the labour movement proved a potent weapon in the hands of dissidents within the official union who manipulated the state's stance against political unionism to condemn interference from Golkar. For example, after SPSI was once again restructured as a federation in 1993, some trade union officials began to use the concepts of 'pure' and 'effective' trade unionism to promote the federation's increased independence from the government. To mark the occasion of SPSI's re-federation, one of its most vocal internal critics, Head of SPSI's Central Committee Wilhelmus Bhoka, publicly stated his disapproval regarding Golkar's corporatist political intervention in SPSI and affirmed his commitment to Social-Democratic unionism:

> With SPSI's return to a federation, we hope that this institution for the representation of workers can be democratic and independent. This means SPSI is not affiliated to any political organisation, and is free from interference from outside parties in carrying out its task of fighting for the rights and interests of its members (*Pikiran Rakyat*, 7 September 1993).

Bhoka later urged the government to purge SPSI's leadership of politicians, noting that almost all the central and sectoral executive officers came from the government-associated mass organisations SOKSI and the Association of Organisations Concerned with Mutual Assistance (Kesatuan Organisasi Serbaguna Gotong Royong, KOSGORO), one of the other military-sponsored organisations that, along with SOKSI, formed the Joint Secretariat of the Functional Group Organisations of the National Front (Sekretariat Bersama Organisasi-Organisasi Golongan Karya Anggota Front Nasional, Sekber Golkar) in 1964.[10] In another example, Saralen Purba, then an official in the SPSI's Forestry Department, argued that SPSI could only function properly if it was democratised. In order to achieve this, he said that the "dropping" of officials from "third parties" into the SPSI leadership should be avoided (*Pikiran Rakyat*, 7 September 1993). By making these statements, activists like Bhoka and Purba demonstrated how the rhetoric of

trade unions by, of and for the workers could be mobilised to oppose government interference in SPSI.

Voices for reform within SPSI became even louder after a series of strikes rocked Surabaya in 1996. Although himself a Golkar official, Marzuki Achmad, who was soon to replace Bomer Pasaribu as SPSI's General Chair, argued that SPSI must be independent if it was "to become a gorilla in its own habitat" (*Merdeka*, 5 July 1997), stating openly that there were "officials in SPSI who are only looking for money by colluding with the Department of Manpower and business to oppress workers". Achmad later complained about the definition of trade unions in a new draft Manpower Law, in which they were described as being formed "by and for workers", but not "from" them, arguing that it was important to include 'from' in order to ensure that "the employer or other parties who wish to form unions" were not successful (*Republika*, 30 June 1997). In another example, in the lead-up to the 1997 election SPSI officials argued that political parties should pay attention to workers' needs but politicians should not use workers as commodities or for the sake of "political rhetoric" (*Republika*, 15 May 1997).

The marriage of the contradictory concepts of *karyawan* and non-worker outsiders explains how the government could justify its promotion of bureaucratic and military intervention in the official union while at the same time condemning non-worker activists for interfering in workers' affairs. In fact, the continuing influence of Revisionism strongly influenced debates about the true purpose of trade unionism and trade union practice, nowhere more apparent than in public statements of discontent from within SPSI. The theoretical roots of the New Order's rejection of non-worker outsiders lay in the premise that trade unions should be independent from their political allies and should pursue workers' socio-economic rather than political interests. As we shall see in the next chapter, the New Order's rejection of non-worker labour intellectuals extended not only to political parties but also to other individual and institutional intellectuals, including human rights activists, student groups and labour NGOs.

3

No Place for Outsiders

With the destruction of independent trade unions and the stifling of other forms of mass organisation in Suharto's New Order, it fell to middle-class student groups and NGOs to find ways to reinvigorate the labour movement. Radical student groups mobilised workers against the injustices of global capitalism while the alternative trade unions of the 1990s challenged the government's one-union policy by demanding the right to register. Meanwhile, labour NGOs organised factory workers, provided training and legal aid, and lobbied the government, multinationals and international NGOs on their behalf. Although a small number of labour NGO activists had working-class backgrounds and some students gave up campus life for the factories, NGOs and student groups were unambiguously identified as non-workers. And while the alternative trade unions promoted themselves as working-class organisations, they too were established and controlled by middle-class activists. In fact, two of the three alternative trade unions of the period grew out of NGOs' attempts to foster independent trade unionism. The third was established by the same radical student groups that gave birth to the Democratic People's Party (Partai Rakyat Demokratik, PRD).

At no time did the New Order see in the labour movement a place for these non-worker outsiders. Nevertheless, a close examination of the contours of the independent labour movement and government responses to it shows that the New Order was inconsistent in its approach to different elements of the independent labour movement. While rejecting the involvement of students and alternative unions, government policy towards labour NGOs varied over time, lurching

between hostile accommodation and outright condemnation in response to the actions of other oppositional groups, the international political climate and the attitudes of individuals within the military and the bureaucracy. Unlike the alternative unions or radical student groups, labour NGOs were allowed to contribute to the development of a better system of industrial relations and the individual welfare of workers as long as they did not seek to assume the industrial functions of trade unions or challenge the one-union policy and the state ideology.

Organised Opposition to New Order Labour Policy

Independent labour organising in the 1980s and 1990s was concentrated in export-oriented manufacturing industries, primarily textiles, clothing and footwear. After a period of declining oil and commodity prices in the early to mid-1980s, the New Order had introduced a policy of export-oriented industrialisation, marked by a relaxation of the regulatory framework for imports and foreign investment, the creation of a number of export processing zones and the establishment of large-scale light manufacturing around the main cities in Java and Sumatra. As a result of this policy, vast new urban communities of workers were formed, giving rural Indonesians — many of them women — their first experience of industrial work (Warouw, 2008). The close proximity in which these workers lived, often many to a single room, created an environment in which community organising was much more feasible than organising within factories was under the government's one-union policy.

During the New Order, the independent labour movement was divided into worker and non-worker organisations, a division that reflected the sharp separation between Indonesia's working and middle classes. In the minds of workers, student groups and labour NGOs were indistinguishable. However, while distinctions between labour NGOs and the other non-worker groups were not clear-cut (Hadiz, 1997: 135–6), they differed from each other in significant ways. Whereas NGOs had formal structures, student groups were unstructured and ephemeral, in many cases not even outliving the tenure of a particular leader. Ideologically, many student groups were inspired by Leninist and Maoist texts that, although banned, were readily available in Indonesia in the 1980s and 1990s. Student activists were less likely than NGO activists to accept the individualist conception of human rights

that informed much of the international NGO movement, turning for inspiration instead to the student movements of South Korea and the Philippines (Aspinall, 2005). During interviews, several NGO activists also referred to these two countries as a source of inspiration for their labour organising. Some argued, however, that the situation in Indonesia was different. "Workers needed someone to bring them together, to bridge the gaps between them. In Korea, it was the students. In Indonesia, it was the NGOs" (NGO Interview BK, 7 March 2000).

Most prominent among the student groups involved in labour issues were those who went on to establish the PRD. The PRD grew out of the leftist student groups that in 1994 established the Indonesian Centre for Labour Struggle (Pusat Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia, PPBI) and in 1995 the student network, Indonesian Students in Solidarity for Democracy (Solidaritas Mahasiswa Indonesia untuk Demokrasi, SMID). Initially called the People's Democratic Union (Persatuan Rakyat Demokratik), the PRD was established in 1994 and changed its name to the Democratic People's Party in 1996. The party, which was supported by the Australian organisation Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor (ASIET), adopted an explicitly Marxist platform and openly challenged all aspects of New Order state corporatism, including the official state ideology. The PRD was outlawed after the so-called 27 July Affair, when the headquarters of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, PDI-P) were stormed and many pro-democracy activists arrested. PRD's Chair Budiman Sujatmiko received a sentence of 13 years' imprisonment, while others received lesser sentences. In the absence of their leaders, other activists in the party attempted to continue its program despite its outlawed status (Gozal, 1997). The PRD re-emerged after the fall of Suharto, when all those imprisoned were released by President Habibie, to contest the 1999 election, attracting only 78,730 votes (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, n.d.b). It reformed in the lead-up to the 2004 election as the People's United Opposition Party (Partai Persatuan Oposisi Rakyat, PPOR) but failed to complete the registration process. Its successor, the National Liberation Party of Unity (Partai Persatuan Pembebasan Nasional, Papernas) was established in January 2007 (Hearman, 2007) but ultimately did not contest the 2009 elections. A core group of activists associated with the PRD's labour wing nevertheless played a defining role in establishing the left of the independent labour movement in the mid- to late 1990s.

Although some NGOs were established by leftist elements of the student movement, NGOs were far less likely to take a radical stance, both because of their roots in the human rights movement and because their donors did not favour radicalism. Responsibility to donors also entailed standards of accountability and demands for forward planning that restricted NGOs' spontaneity and willingness to take risks. Rather than confronting the regime head-on like PRD, policy NGOs engaged with government, seeking to influence policy, or worked quietly and even 'underground' at the grassroots. Some labour NGOs even played a limited role in the official system in their capacity as educators and advocates. However, their involvement in the organisation of labour and their participation in national and international networks critical of the government's labour policy took place well outside the formal industrial relations system.

Whereas student groups and labour NGOs sought to sponsor and support structurally separate worker groups, the alternative trade unions of the late New Order period aspired to become mass organisations of workers — an aspiration that they were able to at least partially achieve. The first alternative union of the 1990s was the Solidarity Free Trade Union (Serikat Buruh Merdeka-Setia Kawan, SBM-SK), established in September 1990 by a number of NGO activists, trade unionists and human rights activists (Bourchier, 1994: 55). The new trade union was headed by Saut Aritonang, formerly of the government-sponsored All-Indonesia Workers' Union (Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, SPSI), and Haji Johannes Cornelius Princen, a Dutchman who had taken on Indonesian citizenship, converted to Islam and become a long-time human rights activist. Among its high-profile founders were also Muchtar Pakpahan, the lawyer and labour NGO activist who later headed the Indonesian Prosperous Trade Union (Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia, SBSI), and Teten Masduki, a prominent advocate of labour rights from the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (Yayasan Bantuan Hukum Indonesia, YLBHI). As David Bourchier (1994: 58) has argued, SBM-SK was the beneficiary both of government attempts to cultivate a liberal image abroad and of protection from progressive elements in the military. Yet although SBM-SK was never officially banned, the government maintained that it was illegitimate on two grounds. First, it contravened the one-union policy by calling itself a union and demanding the right to register. Second, it was formed by middle-class labour activists, not workers. SBM-SK collapsed in early 1992 over disagreements as to whether it should take an industrial or

political role in its attempts to promote workers' rights. According to Saut Aritonang — the ex-unionist — at this time SBM-SK "was getting more and more political [and] less concerned with communicating with workers" (cited in Athreya, 1998: 116–17).

SBSI was formed at a meeting facilitated by the Justice and Welfare Forum (Yayasan Forum Adil Sejahtera, YFAS) and the Communication Foundation (Yayasan Komunikasi, YAKOM) not long after the collapse of SBM-SK. Fourteen months later in July 1993, it held its first congress. A lawyer and academic, SBSI's Chair Muchtar Pakpahan, had been concerned with labour issues since the late 1970s and was associated with YFAS before taking on his role in SBSI. SBM-SK and SBSI shared many characteristics as a result of their connections with labour NGOs and the government's restrictions on independent trade unionism. Pakpahan, like Aritonang, strongly promoted Western Social-Democratic trade unionism as a model for Indonesia. Both organisations sought to emulate the industrial trade unions of Europe, arguing that while labour had both industrial and party-political functions, at least formally those functions should be separated (DPP-SBSI, 1993; SBM-SK, 1990). As a consequence, they rejected a direct political role for trade unions, instead focusing their struggles on the high-profile issues of union recognition and workers' rights to organise and strike. Government restrictions on independent labour organising meant, however, that it was difficult for either organisation to function fully as a trade union.

The inability of both SBM-SK and SBSI to register formally as trade unions meant that they, like the informal worker groups sponsored by NGOs and student groups, were firmly located outside the formal structures of labour representation. As a result, they were unable to conduct workplace organising or collective bargaining or to engage in the tripartite institutions of Pancasila Industrial Relations. Like the labour NGOs behind their establishment, both SBM-SK and SBSI were reliant on foreign funding and donations because restricted access to the shop floor also made it difficult for either organisation to collect dues from members. Finally, in practice, both unions were established and controlled by non-worker intellectuals, despite Pakpahan's protests that — unlike SBM-SK, which he said had been controlled by labour NGOs — SBSI was a "workers' organisation" (Pakpahan, 1997: 45).

SBSI faced its first serious challenge in mid-April 1994 when it initiated strikes involving tens of thousands of workers from some

20 factories in Medan. The strike action quickly descended into ten days of wide-scale destruction and anti-Chinese violence. Dozens of strikers were arrested, including many from SBSI and some labour NGO activists, and at least one person was killed. SBSI Chair Muchtar Pakpahan was arrested on charges of inciting violence and subsequently imprisoned, serving a number of months of his sentence before being released in response to international pressure. Pakpahan was again imprisoned on 30 July 1996 in the wake of the 27 July Affair and held until May 1998, when he was released by Suharto's successor, President Habibie. Despite these obstacles, SBSI survived, going on to become one of the most influential trade unions of the post-Suharto period.

The third of the alternative unions was the Indonesian Centre for Labour Struggle (Pusat Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia, PPBI), formed in October 1994 under the leadership of Dita Sari. A former law student who had left university to work in a factory, Dita Sari was a founding member of the radical student group SMID and a member of the PRD. Although PPBI's three "primary goals" included economic demands, it showed little interest in collective bargaining or the other industrial functions of trade unionism (*Jakarta Crackdown*, 1997: 124). PPBI rejected the division between organised labour's political and economic functions advocated by the other two alternative trade unions, advocating instead the marrying of what Hadiz (1997: 154) calls "labour and wider political struggles." Unlike SBM-SK and SBSI, PPBI did not seek registration.

Between 1994 and 1996 PPBI organised a series of high-profile strikes which provoked strong reactions from the military and the bureaucracy. Most important of these were the Great River Industries and Surabaya strikes of 1995, after which Dita Sari was jailed for six years on charges of inciting violence. Great River Industries manufactured garments in West Java for the domestic and export markets. When between 7,000 and 12,000 workers went on strike in July 1995 to demand the minimum wage, PPBI members took part in the strike and organised demonstrations to the parliament. The Surabaya strikes that followed soon after involved more than 10,000 workers from 15 factories across the city. In early July 1996 PPBI was effectively destroyed when Dita Sari and other activists were arrested and then jailed only weeks before PPBI's parent organisation PRD was outlawed after the 27 July Affair. In 1997 the National Front for Indonesian

Workers' Struggle (Front Nasional Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia, FNPBI) emerged from PPBI's ashes to achieve a high profile in the early post-Suharto period, attracting considerable international attention and funding, particularly after Dita Sari was released from prison in 1999.[1]

Government Responses towards Independent Labour Activism

There were two competing themes in the New Order's official rhetoric and policy towards the independent labour movement. On the one hand, the regime conflated alternative unions, radical student groups and labour NGOs into a single category of opposition, arguing that they were formed and run by non-workers who had no rightful place in the labour movement. This approach masked the differences between these non-worker opposition groups. Yet at other times the government differentiated between various oppositional groups according to the focus of their activities. At the broadest level, the government distinguished NGOs that worked with traditionally non-unionised constituencies from those working with industrial labour. It also distinguished between grassroots and policy NGOs and between the 'good' grassroots NGOs that 'helped' workers and the 'bad' grassroots NGOs that organised them. In short, the government was prepared to allow non-worker groups to contribute to the development of a better system of industrial relations and the individual welfare of workers provided they did not seek to undermine the New Order's approach to trade unionism.

Hostile Accommodation

Labour NGOs were granted partial acceptance from the government so long as they did not assume the industrial functions of trade unions, challenge the one-union policy or suggest that trade unions could be political, because the government recognised that NGO 'interference' in labour issues did not constitute a direct challenge to its one-union policy. The Department of Manpower and other departments were generally happy for NGOs to 'assist' with or comment on manpower issues as long as they did not attempt to encroach upon the role of the officially sanctioned union SPSI. Imam Soedarwo lent his support to this view when he was Chair of SPSI:

> Even if many NGOs or solidarity groups that choose to work on manpower issues emerge, that is not a problem. But they cannot handle industrial disputes because that is SPSI's job (Imam Soedarwo, cited in *Kompas*, 3 August 1993).

Labour NGOs also had some protection from government repression because they were part of the broader NGO community, which enjoyed international support. When pressure from international sources coincided with support for NGOs within some sections of the government and the bureaucracy, considerable effort was actually made to co-opt labour NGOs (see, for example, *Media Indonesia*, 7 November 1991).

The attitudes of successive ministers for Manpower, Department of Manpower officials and the military towards labour NGOs were also often contradictory. For example, the authors of an English-language volume produced by the Department of Manpower towards the end of the New Order period criticised "interference by NGOs and legal aid institutions in companies' internal affairs, particularly in the relationship between employers and workers", but fewer than ten pages later, stated that the Department "supports and motivates ... NGOs to conduct education for the labour union's cadres" (Department of Manpower, 1997: 18, 27). The first serious attempts to accommodate labour NGOs came after they helped the workers in the 14 factories of the Gadjah Tunggal Group to organise a series of strikes between 27 July and 22 August 1991. After the military had interrogated a number of activists and eventually broken the strike by direct intervention (Arini, 1993: 49–51), a meeting was organised by the YLBHI to encourage dialogue between Minister for Manpower Cosmas Batubara and NGO representatives. At this meeting, Batubara warned NGO activists that:

> It is expected that NGOs do not take on the function of SPSI, the channelling of workers' aspirations. Instead, they should work to ensure that SPSI can function properly (*Kompas*, 16 October 1991).

On the same occasion, Batubara made overtures to labour NGOs in an attempt to develop a more cooperative relationship, suggesting that YLBHI should act as a coordinator for all NGOs involved in labour affairs. He also offered to open a hotline to his office so that labour NGOs could contact him directly (*Kompas*, 16 October 1991).

Like many others in the government, Batubara was not always consistent in his position on labour NGOs. At the end of 1991, he

was again quoted on the subject of NGO involvement in labour issues, this time in a less accommodating tone:

> I am concerned if workers' cases involve other parties. [Workers] already have their channels, like SPSI. It cannot be accepted if their issues with the company are brought to other parties because that just broadens the problem (*Kompas*, 23 December 1991).

Payaman Simanjuntak, who served as Director-General of Industrial Relations and Labour Standards in the Department of Manpower during the Batubara years, was also inconsistent on the question of NGO involvement with labour. Meeting with NGOs not long after they had been in talks with Batubara in 1991, he warned that:

> Experience shows that the involvement of [NGOs or legal aid organisations] actually makes problems more complicated and weakens the system and existing mechanisms (*Kompas*, 31 October 1991).

Simanjuntak went on to argue that if SPSI could not help workers, rather than running to a labour NGO, they should contact him directly through Box 555, a Department of Manpower initiative to attempt to divert workers from independent labour organising. Simanjuntak's comments sparked a strong reaction from NGO activists, which the government sought to counter by organising a series of other meetings to discuss the role of NGOs in labour affairs. In addition, Simanjuntak moderated his approach and took steps to implement the plan for an NGO hotline to the Minister. These initiatives were accompanied by a more general softening of his stance. Workers, Simanjuntak now said, could ask for help from NGOs when they would not otherwise be represented — a situation that he believed would be limited to cases where arbitration had failed and the plaintiffs were forced to go to court. Simanjuntak reiterated, however, that dispute resolution was a bipartite process in which neither NGOs nor the Department of Manpower should interfere (*Media Indonesia*, 7 November 1991).

The next Minister for Manpower, Abdul Latief, a businessman who served in Suharto's Sixth Development Cabinet (1993–98), was much less sympathetic to NGOs' involvement in labour issues. In September 1993, for example, he claimed that:

> ... the labor condition [sic] in Indonesia is in disorder because too many non-governmental organizations are now being drawn in to interfere in labor affairs (*Jakarta Post*, 3 September 1993).

Yet, like Batubara, Latief was forced to acknowledge the contribution of labour NGOs to improving aspects of the industrial relations system and the quality of human resources. In that same month, he conceded that:

> All sectors of society, including non-governmental organisations concerned with labor matters, should take a more active role in helping the government to cope with the low quality of human resources, the unfavourable waging system and unemployment (*Jakarta Post*, 18 September 1993).

As Batubara had done before him, Latief argued that NGOs should be restricted to providing practical assistance to workers and engaging in advocacy campaigns and that NGOs should not seek to take on the functions of the official union (*Jakarta Post*, 3 September 1993).

When grassroots labour NGOs became more involved in training and organising, some officials began to differentiate between them rather than condemning or praising them as a homogenous group. For example, in 1994 the head of the Department of Manpower Office in Bandung, Apon Suryana, urged workers to resist the influence of "certain parties" who pretended to protect the interests of workers while using them for "certain purposes and interests". He added, however, that not all NGOs were bad, citing the cooperative relationship between the Bandung Legal Aid Institute (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Bandung, LBH Bandung) and the Department (*Pikiran Rakyat*, 31 October 1994). Some officials and trade unionists were even prepared to acknowledge the link between the weaknesses of SPSI and the rapid growth in labour activism outside official channels. In 1991, for example, the Deputy Governor of West Java noted that:

> The public perception of the limitations of SPSI's handling of [labour] issues pushes third parties, such as legal aid organisations, NGOs, SBM-SK and other organisations to take advantage of the situation and conditions of workers (*Pikiran Rakyat*, 2 December 1991).[2]

Similarly, in 1994 a military spokesperson told the official union to "open its eyes" to the reasons why workers approached NGOs (*Jayakarta*, 25 April 1994). Around the same time, the outspoken head of SPSI's Central Committee, Wilhelmus Bhoka, acknowledged that NGOs had handled many more of the labour disputes that had occurred in recent years than had SPSI (*Jakarta Post*, 11 November 1995). After Dita Sari's

arrest in July 1996, Minister for Manpower Abdul Latief argued that if trade unions in the newly restructured Federation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, FSPSI) were stronger, workers would not be "as easily incited by operatives who represent workers in name, but really only seek to realise their own interests" (*Kompas*, 7 August 1996). Then in 1997 the Coordinator of the Central Disputes Resolution Committee told a forum in Surabaya that local laws banning NGOs from advising workers contravened a still-extant 1964 law. SPSI, he added, should ask itself why workers were going elsewhere (Soetrisno S. Adisewejo, cited in *Suara Pembaruan*, 2 June 1997).

Although the military consistently adopted a punitive approach when labour activism was deemed to threaten national stability, towards the end of the New Order period it also publicly recognised differences between individual organisations. For example, the assistant head of the Armed Forces' Social and Political Affairs Unit, Suwarno Adiwijoyo, urged the Indonesian people to differentiate between NGOs that were trying to empower the community and those that were only seeking to empower themselves. The latter, he said, "spread seeds of hatred by focusing on issues of rich and poor, race and religion and are involved in destructive actions".[3] Adiwijoyo concluded by saying that the Armed Forces would accept community organisations only if they were useful to the community and did not get involved in "practical politics" (*Pikiran Rakyat*, 30 December 1995). Syamsul Maarif, Commander of the Bhaskara Jaya Military Resort based in Surabaya, also differentiated between good and bad NGOs. Maarif cited the labour NGO Foundation for Labour Advocacy, Research and Education (Yayasan Arek Surabaya, Arek), which ran training programs, made workers aware of their rights and provided motivation for them, as an example of a "good" NGO. He contrasted Arek with the PRD, which he described as a "bad" NGO, which "used workers for their own purposes" and had "openly admitted" to being behind the Surabaya strikes (*Republika*, 12 August 1996). Nevertheless, these instances remained the exception rather than the rule. More common were blanket statements by the military in which NGOs were criticised for being negative "outside influences" (for example, *Suara Pembaruan*, 22 August 1991).

As this discussion suggests, the contribution of labour NGO activists in their capacity as public advocates of workers' rights was far less controversial in the eyes of the regime than their involvement in grassroots organising and public demonstrations. This fact was reflected

in the high level of press coverage on the advocacy positions taken by labour NGOs on issues from child labour to labour politics. The range and political sensitivity of the subjects about which labour NGO activists wrote and the frequency with which they published articles occupying half a page or more in broadsheet newspapers were quite remarkable. These lengthy opinion pieces were contributed by activists who were usually identified in the byline as a representative of their NGO. Some NGO activists even had a regular column in a leading daily newspaper such as the 'Legal Notes' (*Catatan Hukum*) written by the Executive Director of YLBHI for *Kompas*. Such articles usually focused on the research and advocacy functions of labour NGOs. By contrast, attempts by grassroots labour NGOs to promote the establishment of an alternative labour movement were seldom reported.

Those newspaper articles that did describe the activities of grassroots labour NGOs and legal aid bureaux almost always focused on their helping function. For example, trade union education initiatives involving the Foundation for Labour Movement (Yayasan Buruh Membangun, YBM) and SPSI were frequently reported in the military paper *Barata*, along with details of YBM's community programs for workers and its opinions on collective labour agreements, wages and the deficiencies of SPSI. Legal aid provided by the regional affiliates of YLBHI and other legal aid bureaux was also frequently reported. By contrast, only a handful of articles published between 1991 and 1998 directly mentioned labour NGOs in any organising capacity. One such article described a case in which NGOs accompanied workers from Bogor to the national parliament in order to stage a protest (*Kompas*, 27 February 1995). Another mentioned the Surabaya Legal Aid Institute's involvement in a demonstration in the town of Jombang, East Java, where students, Muslims and NGO activists protested about violence against workers (*Harian Terbit*, 31 October 1995). In a less direct statement about the organising role of labour NGOs in 1996, it was reported that workers "guided by" the YBM and the Urban Community Mission of the Batak Protestant Christian Assembly (Pelayanan Masyarakat Kota Huria Kristen Batak Protestan, PMK) had participated in a university study of discrimination against women (*Barata*, Week 2 October 1996). In another oblique reference, a series of articles referred to the cancelling of performances by the NGO-sponsored Workers Theatre in Jakarta and later in Solo (*Suara Merdeka*, 25 September 1995; *Kompas*, 15 October 1995).

The One-Union Policy and the Exclusion of Non-Workers

The second, more dominant theme in official attitudes towards NGOs and alternative unions in the early 1990s was the failure to differentiate between the alternative unions aspiring to a mass-based worker membership and labour NGOs, particularly those involved in grassroots organising. This conflation of different types of labour movement organisations was prompted by the perceived threat they represented to the New Order's one-union policy. The one-union policy was overtly challenged in 1990 by the establishment of SBM-SK and again in 1992 and 1994 when SBSI and PPBI were formed. Grassroots labour NGOs' organising activities represented a more subtle challenge to the policy, but a challenge nevertheless.

Despite international support for the independent labour movement, the regime's commitment to the one-union policy remained firm and was invoked regularly at public functions. For example, during preparations for the eighteenth anniversary of the formation of the official trade union, President Suharto reminded workers that "there is no need to create a new labour organisation outside SPSI". In order to reinforce this message, Suharto announced that he had accepted SPSI's suggestion that the anniversary be designated Indonesian Workers' Day because:

> 20 February 1973 has historical value as the moment when the Declaration of the Oneness of Indonesian Workers was launched, after the period of workers' disarray before the G30S/PKI (*Wawasan*, 20 February 1991).[4]

Despite Minister for Manpower Cosmas Batubara's attempts to revive the image of Indonesian trade unionism and build cooperative links with labour NGOs, he regularly invoked the spectre of Communism when stating his support for the one-union policy and his rejection of the alternative unions. Although reluctant to ban the alternative unions outright, Batubara argued that "If there are many unions, as Princen desires ... there will be many quarrels between them and we will ultimately return to the period before G30S/PKI" (*Tempo*, 8 June 1991).

The government also rejected alternative unions because they were not established by workers. For example, after the formation of SBSI, Payaman Simanjuntak argued that "SBSI is not a union because it was not established by workers but by observers of manpower issues"

(*Suara Merdeka*, 4 August 1993). He emphasised that the Department was not forbidding alternative unions, just trade unions formed by non-workers:

> If it is said that there are many people who are not satisfied with SPSI I ask, "Who are they? Is it true that those who are not satisfied are workers?" As I see it, those who are not satisfied with SPSI are not workers, and have never been workers.... If the people who want to establish [a union] are not workers, whether they be NGOs or lawyers or individual NGO activists, the government will think hard and ask: "What do they want? What are their motives?" (*Pikiran Rakyat*, 6 August 1993).

After the announcement in 1993 that the official trade union was to be again restructured as a trade union federation in response to international pressure to allow more than one trade union, Minister for Manpower Abdul Latief made a similar statement, arguing that "freedom of association is fully guaranteed in Indonesia but the government would not recognize trade unions which are not set up by workers" (*Jakarta Post*, 3 September 1993). A week later, at the inauguration of nine sectoral unions affiliated with the newly re-federated FSPSI, Latief again told journalists that the "government will not recognise [SBSI and SBM-SK] because they were established by individuals with political interests and not by workers" (*Jakarta Post*, 8 September 1993). A year later, when the National Human Rights Commission proposed the merger of SPSI and SBSI, Latief responded by saying that individuals from SBSI could join SPSI but a merger was impossible because SBSI was not a recognised organisation (*Suara Merdeka*, 18 June 1994).

Perhaps more surprisingly, the 1993 delegation from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions to Indonesia (ICFTU) concurred with the government's assessment of SBSI. The delegation's report concluded that:

> The SBSI is essentially composed of a group of lawyers, who are carrying out some education and labour advocacy in select areas .... The operations of the SBSI [are] ephemeral, apparently [serving] the interests of various political and social forces within the country, and dubious international agencies (ICFTU-APRO, 1993: 7).

In response to these accusations, SBSI leader Muchtar Pakpahan rejected the substance of such evaluations of SBSI rather than the framework in which those evaluations were made. Instead of arguing for a

wider definition of trade unionism, he again insisted that SBSI was a "pure trade union" set up by workers (*Jakarta Post*, 5 October 1993).

Public statements by the government about the dangers of outside involvement in labour affairs continued until the very end of the New Order. In a 1994 article bearing the headline "No Compromises with SBSI and LBH", Minister for Manpower Abdul Latief was again reported as saying that although the weaknesses in SPSI encouraged the emergence of other "manpower observers" like SBSI and LBH, the Department of Manpower would not compromise with them because "SBSI is an illegal organisation and LBH is a group of out-of-work law graduates" (*Barata*, Week 4 July 1994). In the wake of the Medan riots, the Coordinating Minister for Politics and Stability General Soesilo Soedarman and Commander of the Armed Forces General Feisal Tanjung reinforced the government's refusal to recognise SBSI on the basis that SBSI was an NGO and not a trade union, arguing that it therefore had no right to become involved in demonstrations by workers (*Kompas*, 29 April 1994). Similarly, an English-language document published by the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1997 stated that:

> The controversial SBSI or Indonesian Prosperity Labor Association was formed in April 1992 by certain elements from political, human rights and legal aid organizations. This association has not been able to legally prove that it was established by workers or their representatives at the company level. Moreover, the association has not been able to prove that its objective is to pursue collective labor agreements. From its inception, it has been shown that SBSI is concerned far more with political than with labor issues. Therefore, if the SBSI will continue as an association, it should be categorized as a non-governmental organization (NGO) rather than as a trade union (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1997).

The Department of Foreign Affairs argued that, as an NGO:

> SBSI may still organize programs related to labor issues, such as workers' education programs or legal aid for trade unions, but it should not duplicate or take away the roles and functions of trade unions (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1997).

As these quotations suggest, the government dealt with the challenge to the one-union policy presented by SBSI by refusing to recognise it as a union.

Accusations about the manipulation of workers by NGOs and alternative unions were most strident when addressing their participation in strikes. After the Gadjah Tunggal strikes of 1991, SPSI Chair Imam Soedarwo observed:

> What we need to be careful about are strikes that are instigated by outsiders and not organised by SPSI. There are instigators from this NGO and that NGO, from this legal aid organisation and that legal aid organisation. There are also those who call themselves labour unions outside SPSI. If they are involved, the strike in question is not legitimate.... This is what must be guarded against (*Suara Pembaruan*, 23 April 1991).

Other public commentary on the Gadjah Tunggal strikes was in a similar vein. SPSI's Secretary for Education, Bambang Wirahyono, argued that "in this case, there is a possibility that other parties have directed the workers to act in this way" (*Pikiran Rakyat*, 12 January 1991). Admiral Sudomo, then Coordinating Minister for Politics and Stability, said that the government would act decisively against the "parties who incited and intimidated [workers] so that a strike would occur in the companies of the PT Gadjah Tunggal Group", accusing those parties of being "heroes who arrived too late" (*pahlawan kesiangan*), who "threatened national stability" (*Harian Terbit*, 22 August 1991). In December of the same year, it was reported that the military was tracking down the people believed to have manipulated the strikes of the last few months for their own purposes and profit. According to military representative Major-General Harseno:

> It has been found that a number of demonstrations have been exploited by people, both those acting in their own name or in the name of organisations that protect the interests of the people (*Kompas*, 14 December 1991).

Statements about the role of outsiders became even more vociferous in the wake of the Medan riots of 1994. After the riots, Minister for Manpower Abdul Latief was reported as saying there were "third parties" who were unhappy about the good relationship between employers and employees and had incited workers to strike in order to increase their own popularity (*Suara Merdeka*, 23 April 1994). Minister for Defence and Security General Edi Sudrajat again likened the independent labour movement to Communists, commenting that in Medan:

> Many people were brought together at the same time in the same place, then filled with demands for wage rises, then mobilised. That's the Indonesian Communist Party way (*Kompas*, 29 April 1994).

After the Medan riots, General Feisal Tanjung, Major-General A. Pranowo, and the Armed Forces' General Head of Staff, Lieutenant-General H.B.L. Mantiri, also drew analogies between the destruction and unrest in Medan and methods used by the PKI (*Suara Merdeka*, 23 April 1994). In the immediate aftermath of the riots, Pranowo was reported to have said that the Medan riots proved the workers' movement to be no longer "pure" because "outside forces" with "certain purposes and objectives" had been involved. The "outside forces" in question included activists from "SBSI and other NGOs" (*Republika*, 19 April 1994). In a similar vein, Minister Latief later argued that the riots were not his responsibility because they had not originated "purely from workers' aspirations" (*Harian Terbit*, 4 May 1994). Feisal Tanjung went further, making the scurrilous accusation that:

> The people behind that demonstration were born into ex-Communist Party families.... And we know that the director and scenario [sic] behind the Medan demonstrations were members of SBSI (*Barata*, Week 1 May 1994).

The Revisionist undertones of these comments linking members of the alternative trade unions and NGO activists to the PKI yet again demonstrated the extent to which Revisionist rhetoric dominated New Order statements about trade unionism.

After the PPBI-led Great River Industries strike of 1995, there was yet another surge in media coverage of the one-union policy and the negative influence of outsiders. In an article entitled "NGOs Accused of Masterminding Worker Strikes", Director-General of Industrial Relations Suwarto was cited as saying:

> There are strong indications of political elements at play here. There are people who used those workers for their own political interests (*Jakarta Post*, 22 July 1995).

Similarly, Minister for Manpower Abdul Latief justified military involvement in the strike by saying the government had to act after discovering that an (un-named) "third party" had been "fanning" the strike (*Media Indonesia*, 26 July 1995). A year later, nine "non-workers" who came from "outside the factory environment" were again accused

of "masterminding" a PPBI strike. Major-General Imam Utomo, then Commander of East Java's Brawijaya Division, condemned the outsiders, saying that "thousands of workers who just want to do their work properly were forced to demonstrate or strike". He went on to announce that the armed forces were planning to hold "dialogues" with the workers to spread the message that workers should resist being "influenced by talk from outside because if they go on strike and their factory is bankrupted, they will suffer as well" (*Surya*, 2 June 1996). President Suharto himself encouraged workers to focus on national consolidation so that they would not be easily influenced by incitement from "third parties" who claimed to act for workers (*Surya*, 2 June 1996). Two months later the Military Commander of Jakarta General Sutiyoso echoed Suharto's words, telling thousands of workers to be careful of "irresponsible parties" who use workers for their own ends (*Merdeka*, 19 September 1996). This sustained attempt to demonise labour activists by associating them with the PKI had very serious implications in Suharto's Indonesia, where suspected Communists and their families were ostracised, and even prevented from working (see Heryanto, 1999).[5]

The language used to describe the involvement of NGOs, radical student groups and alternative unions in labour issues generally and in strikes in particular gives much insight into the New Order's thinking on the labour movement. The terms used by government, bureaucrats, the military and some SPSI officials to describe non-worker labour activists were replete with references to the threat of Communism and the illegitimacy of non-worker involvement in the labour movement. Some of these terms, like *unsur luar*, *pihak luar* or *pihak lain* (outsiders, other parties), *pihak tertentu*, *orang tertentu* or *oknum tertentu* (certain parties or operatives), and the ubiquitous *pihak ketiga* (third parties), referred to the non-worker status of these groups. Sometimes, they were even referred to as *organisasi tanpa bentuk* ('formless' organisations), a term which was commonly used to describe putative Communists in the New Order period. Other terms referred to their actions. NGOs, student groups and alternative unions were accused of *campur tangan* or *mencampuri* (interfering) or *mengintervensi* (intervening) in the employer-employee relationship. They were said to have *menghasut* (incited) or *memancing* (enticed), *menggerakkan* (mobilised), *mempengaruhi* (influenced), *menyusupi* (infiltrated) and *melakukan intimidasi* (intimidated) workers in order to make them go on strike. They had done this, officials argued, because they saw workers

as *alat politik* (political tools) or *komoditi politik* (political commodities) to further their own political interests. In their attempt to do so, these outsiders were accused of having *memakai*, *menggunakan*, *memperalat* and *memanfaatkan* (used), *mengeksploitasi* (exploited), *memanipulasikan* (manipulated) or *menunggangi* (ridden) those workers. Their *subversif* (subversive) actions were said to threaten national stability and, therefore, the national ideology and the 1945 Constitution.

The constant use of terms such as 'outsider' and 'third party' to describe non-worker involvement in the labour movement elicited strong responses from NGO activists and academics, some of which were published in the daily press (for example, Budiman, 1991; Djati, 1994). Even journalists sometimes criticised the terms in which strikes were described. For example, one editorial in *Merdeka* argued that while some demonstrations were violent, this did not mean that every strike should be condemned as having a provocateur or mastermind (*Merdeka*, 13 May 1994). Less than two weeks after the 27 July Affair, a *Kompas* editorial asked:

> Is the role of workers in creating national stability really so strategic? This question arises after the government has made pleas two days in a row to workers not to be easily incited by third parties (*Kompas*, 10 August 1996).

For the government, the role of workers was indeed strategic economically and politically. Not only was the economy heavily dependent on export revenue created by cheap, docile factory labour, but the independent labour movement also represented the greatest challenge the regime faced to its functional group system.

However, the government's stance against outsiders was challenged even from within SPSI itself. From the mid-1990s, some SPSI activists initiated cooperative exercises with NGOs and alternative unions, even calling on occasions for recognition of trade unions outside SPSI. In 1994 Saralen Purba (then Deputy Chair of SPSI's Central Committee) had called for acceptance of SBSI as a partner in struggle. In 1995 the head of SPSI's Central Committee, Wilhelmus Bhoka, together with Marzuki Achmad, who later replaced Bomer Pasaribu as Secretary-General of SPSI, made a statement of solidarity in support of Muchtar Pakpahan (*Kompas*, 29 April 1994). The next year the Metals, Electronics and Machinery Workers' Union (Serikat Pekerja Logam, Elektronik dan Mesin, SP-LEM) hosted a national seminar involving NGOs, students and members of SPSI (*Barata* Week

1 February 1995). While Bomer Pasaribu continued to attack SBSI, PPBI and "other organisations and groups who claim to further workers' interests" (*Kompas*, 7 August 1996), Marzuki Achmad made an announcement just before he replaced Pasaribu that SPSI would:

> ... [i]mmediately approach organisations which have a *special interest* [English in the original] such as legal aid organisations, the National Commission for Human Rights and NGOs that focus on women and child workers (*Kompas*, 18 November 1996).

In 1997, a number of meetings between SPSI officials and NGOs and joint initiatives were reported in the press, including the establishment of a jointly run complaint desk for workers (for example, *Kompas*, 16 October 1997; *Pikiran Rakyat*, 8 November 1997). Yet despite this public presence of dissenting voices, the labour organising undertaken by NGOs, alternative unions and radical students continued to be portrayed as the work of outsiders by government officials in the daily press and elsewhere.

The New Order's responses to the independent labour movement confirmed the ongoing currency of Revisionist logic in its labour rhetoric and policy. The limits of the government's acceptance of middle-class labour activism on behalf of workers were always clear: it had no tolerance for individuals or groups that it perceived to have jeopardised organised labour's freedom from non-worker intervention or politicisation. The government thus firmly rejected the alternative unions because they openly challenged its policy and attacked the left of the student movement for espousing a Marxist framework. At the same time, however, it cautiously accepted NGO assistance in the provision of welfare and education and even allowed NGO activists to comment publicly on labour affairs. In other words, the government provided space for NGOs that behaved as the regime believed the middle class should.

4

Indonesia's Labour NGOs

Indonesia's labour NGOs flourished in an environment which, although difficult, provided them with opportunities and the support they needed to organise and advocate on behalf of labour, providing hope and direction to a new generation of industrial workers who had little experience of organising or the benefits of collective action. Each labour NGO possessed unique characteristics as a result of its individual focus, composition and ideological leanings but collectively they played a defining role in the reconstruction of the Indonesian labour movement in the final decades of the New Order. Although their role changed after the fall of Suharto, labour NGOs continued to engage in advocacy on behalf of workers and to assist the independent unions that emerged with the liberalisation of the industrial relations system. At the grassroots, they continued to provide advice and moral support alongside legal aid and trade union training, thereby striking at the heart of trade union-centred definitions of organised labour.

The relationship between labour NGO activists and workers was nevertheless highly contested. The New Order tolerated NGO involvement in labour issues because of their status as limited-membership organisations of middle-class, non-worker outsiders. Yet these very same characteristics made it difficult for grassroots labour NGO activists to justify their involvement in activities such as grassroots organising that fell within the domain of trade unions. The distinction between labour NGOs and their trade union counterparts is clearly evident when Indonesia's labour NGOs are compared to the alternative trade unions they helped to establish in the 1990s.

An influential part of the broader anti-authoritarian movement that emerged in opposition to the New Order, Indonesia's labour NGOs are most often described as a subset of the NGOs that deal

with politics and human rights issues, especially in analyses that focus on the relationship between the middle class and the state (for example, Aspinall, 2005; Eldridge, 1995; Sinaga, 1994; Uhlin, 1997).[1] Yet as this chapter shows, while some labour NGOs do deal with broader political and human rights concerns, not all labour NGOs fall within this category. And even where they do, by definition, labour NGOs are differentiated from otherwise quite similar NGOs by their focus on labour, whether they undertake advocacy work or some of the tasks traditionally associated with trade unionism.

Substitute Unions?

Scholars with an interest in labour have adopted one of two approaches to NGOs, depending largely upon their framework of analysis. As Douglas Kammen noted in his 1997 doctoral dissertation, the "few scholarly essays on Indonesian industrial labour" available at that time focused on either "the 'spontaneous' emergence of 'working class militancy and activism' [or] ... the organisational efforts of labour activists working through non-governmental organisations and the independent trade unions" (Kammen 1997: 23–5).

Where they dealt with NGOs, proponents of the proletarianisation approach tended to focus on those NGOs' ability to facilitate the expression of class consciousness based on workers' experiences of industrialisation, while paying little attention to the NGOs themselves (for example, Andriyani, 1996a; Athreya, 1998; Saptari, 1995). By contrast, those more concerned with organised labour have sought to assess the extent to which labour NGOs promoted or obstructed the development of independent unions. Vedi Hadiz, the best-known proponent of this approach, has adopted a contradictory position on Indonesia's labour NGOs, which he describes as 'substitute' trade unions born of necessity in a climate where independent unionism was not possible (Interview with Vedi Hadiz, 15 March 2000).[2] Hadiz acknowledges the value of the "non-traditional" role played by labour NGOs within the specific historical context of New Order Indonesia, while at the same time equating them with the nascent worker organisations of industrialising Europe (Hadiz, 1997: 134–56). Scholar-activist Kusyuniati, the former head of the Independent Women's Foundation (Yayasan Annisa Swasti, Yasanti) and the author of the other study that deals with labour NGOs in some detail, takes a different

view, rejecting the proposition that NGOs are a temporary anomaly in the organised labour movement (Kusyuniati, 1998). Invoking what she calls the "Marxist" tenet that "students and other intellectuals are expected to help workers understand their rights", she argues that their involvement had been inadequate, and thus contributed to the weakness of the movement (Kusyuniati, 1998: 349–51).

Despite their divergent conclusions about the legitimacy of NGO involvement, the composition and function of an 'authentic' union were the primary criteria of significance invoked by both Hadiz and Kusyuniati when assessing the independent labour movement. As a result, both maintain that the boundary between the alternative unions and labour NGOs was largely artificial, albeit for different reasons. Kusyuniati describes labour NGOs as outsiders, but accorded the alternative unions of the late New Order period the same standing. This is so, she argues, because while the Indonesian Prosperous Trade Union (Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia, SBSI) and the Solidarity Free Trade Union (Serikat Buruh Merdeka-Setia Kawan, SBM-SK) claimed to be unions, they were established by NGOs and political activists rather than by workers (Kusyuniati, 1998: 283, 319–20).[3] Likewise, Hadiz locates both alternative unions and NGOs within the broader category of "organisations within which middle-class activists and workers have collaborated", arguing that the alternative unions' lack of shop floor access and middle-class hierarchies meant that they were in fact no different from labour NGOs (Hadiz, 1997: 136).[4] What these scholars ignore is that, despite their historical links, middle-class leadership and exclusion from the formal industrial relations system, the structures and purpose of the alternative unions were fundamentally different from those of NGOs and student groups.

Labour NGO activists interviewed in the late 1990s and early 2000s recognised the fundamental differences between their own organisations and the alternative unions disregarded by Hadiz and Kusyuniati. While many activists blurred the boundaries between radical labour NGOs and student groups, not even leftist labour NGO activists suggested that NGOs be conflated with the mass-based alternative unions of the New Order period.[5] When asked to explain the difference between their organisations and the alternative unions, NGO activists proffered one of three opinions. One group of activists emphasised the difference in form and function between limited-membership organisations seeking to assist workers and mass-membership unions

seeking to organise them, arguing that labour NGOs were, by definition, limited-member organisations. As an activist from one Jakarta-based Christian NGO observed, NGOs were very conscious that "mass organisations and non-governmental organisations are different" (NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000). Other activists echoed this statement, including an activist from another Christian NGO, who again emphasised the organisational differences between NGOs and trade unions:

> NGOs are an institute — an institute that cares about workers — but not a trade union. We don't need a large membership ... like a trade union does (NGO Interview AO, 31 January 2000).

A second group of activists firmly opposed ongoing 'outside' involvement in trade unions, arguing that unions had greater integrity because of their status as a working-class vehicle for workers' interests. These activists also drew a sharp distinction between themselves and the worker groups that they sponsored. The separation between NGO-sponsored worker groups and the labour NGOs themselves, although often more rhetorical than practical, was also predicated on the activists' convictions about the nature of trade unions. In the words of a long-standing Jakarta-based grassroots NGO activist:

> The task of NGOs is to encourage the workers to form unions, not to control them. We need to raise their self-awareness so that they see the need to organise (NGO Interview AU, 4 January 2000).

Thus worker groups remained formally independent even when they met in the presence of NGO activists in premises rented by NGOs, attended NGO-run training courses and implemented NGO-designed initiatives.

The final group of activists referred specifically to funding when defining the difference between trade unions and labour NGOs. Two legally trained labour NGO activists from different NGOs argued that self-funding was a matter of principle for trade unions, which had the ability to raise funds from members, whereas NGOs necessarily depended on donors (NGO Interview AJ, 23 March 1999; NGO Interview AZ, 24 March 1999). A third activist argued that workers need to build their own unions and pay for them themselves in order to be truly free (NGO Interview AM, 12 March 1999) and a fourth

described due-based funding as the defining feature of a trade union (NGO Interview BR, 12 December 2002). According to a fifth grassroots NGO activist, financial independence was important because it brought with it freedom from outside influence:

> The labour movement — unions — they're responsible to their members. But NGOs are responsible to their boards. That's very different. Then there's the problem of money. NGOs have to ask for money from outside. They don't have dues or anything. They can't run by themselves. Unions are different. They can survive on their members' dues. NGOs can't do that (NGO Interview AB, 14 February 2000).

Although this position ignores the fact that the alternative unions of the New Order period also relied heavily on external funding, it reflects NGO activists' understanding of the structural differences between the two organisational forms and their commitment to a labour movement built upon trade unions by, for and of workers. What did not occur to activists in any of these three groups, however, is that their adherence to a narrow definition of the labour movement as a movement of trade unions placed unnecessary limits on their engagement with workers by positioning labour NGOs as 'outsiders'. Had they defined the labour movement more broadly to include non-union organisations such as political parties and NGOs, they could have imagined their having a permanent place in that movement.

Grassroots and Policy NGOs

In the late New Order period, Indonesia's labour NGOs undertook both grassroots organising and research and policy advocacy functions. Fauzi Abdullah has argued that all labour NGOs took on all aspects of this work:

> In Indonesia, many NGOs are active in the area of labour. Some of these NGOs include labour as one of their fields of activity while other NGOs focus exclusively on labour. Both types of NGOs enter into all labour-related areas, i.e. litigation, advocacy, organising, education and training, research and so on. There is no single NGO that has specialised in one aspect because all the aspects are inter-related and must be handled at the same time. This is because labour NGOs fill a vacuum in labour activities that should be the work of labour unions (LIPS, 1999: 70).[6]

Some NGOs did indeed combine grassroots organising with advocacy and research. Others focused primarily on one or the other, as demonstrated by the fact that there was much discussion within the labour NGO community about the relative contribution of grassroots and policy NGOs (see also Billah, Busyairi and Aly, 1993b; Fakih, 1995). Although some NGO activists felt that one strategy was superior, they almost always acknowledged the importance of both grassroots organising work and the role NGOs had played in raising public awareness of the government's and companies' abuse of workers' rights.

NGOs became involved in grassroots labour organising, activists said, because under the New Order workers themselves had little opportunity to develop the physical and conceptual resources required to take control of their situation. At the grassroots level, Indonesia's labour NGOs organised factory workers, provided legal aid and resources and lobbied multinational corporations and international NGOs on behalf of workers. Grassroots labour NGOs also conducted education programs, established community worker groups and offered logistical support and encouragement for strike actions. Some NGOs even trained 'worker guerrillas' (*gerilya buruh*), who took over some of the official union's plant-level units in an attempt to reform the official union from within. Meanwhile, activists from research and policy advocacy NGOs used media statements and public advocacy campaigns to expose labour abuses and lobby the government and multinational corporations for increases in the minimum wage, improvements in occupational health and safety and changes to labour legislation. They also documented the living and working conditions of factory labour, writing lengthy reports that they disseminated in Indonesia and abroad. Collectively, these policy-oriented labour NGOs raised local and international awareness about labour conditions in Indonesia and, in doing so, exerted continual pressure on government policy and procedures. As one grassroots NGO activist observed, policy NGOs were important because they acted as "bumper-bars", protecting grassroots NGOs and their initiatives. He argued that by raising labour issues in the public arena, they "collided first", to some extent protecting workers who experienced the full brunt of government policies on a day-to-day basis (NGO Interview AL, 8 March 2000).

The domestic initiatives of policy and grassroots labour NGOs were complemented by their links with international NGOs and labour organisations (see, for example, Masduki, 1993). Labour NGOs took

part in general NGO forums such as the International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (INFID). They also had extensive links with labour groups in other Asian countries, including the Philippines and South Korea, as well as labour and other activist groups in Europe, Australia and North America.[7] These collaborative relationships provided NGOs with leverage not available domestically, as illustrated by the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) case described below. As noted in the Introduction, labour NGOs' links with influential international human rights organisations helped to cushion them against government repression.

Labour NGOs' international connections also provided a vital source of funding for their campaigns and activities either in the form of recurring grants or project-based funding. Many labour NGOs received funds directly from a range of international sources, including private organisations such as the United States-based Ford Foundation and the Dutch Humanistic Institution for Co-operation with Developing Countries (Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, HIVOS). They were also supported by government aid organisations such as the Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand, NOVIB) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The European churches were generous donors to Christian labour NGOs, while an additional source of project funding was available for labour research from campaigns for international human rights and international labour campaigns, including the anti-Nike campaign. Some labour NGOs also received money from the International Labour Organisation, trade unions and union-sponsored Social Solidarity Organisations in Europe and North America, most notably the American Center for International Labour Solidarity and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

Without international funding, the activities of labour NGOs would have been severely curtailed, if indeed they could have operated at all. This dependence on foreign donors attracted criticism from government and other sources. Government spokespeople and other critics argued that outside funding meant that NGOs were primarily accountable 'upwards' beyond national boundaries to the community of donors who support their work, rather than 'downwards' to the workers they served or even to society as a whole (Ford, 2006b). The extent to which foreign funding affected NGO programs depended to

some extent on whether funding was provided in a block grant or on a project basis. Some donors provided stable funding over three- to five-year periods, which allowed NGOs to propose a general program and then implement it without constant interference. Other donors funded on a much shorter basis on smaller, more focused projects that were required to fit the donor's changing priorities.

In addition to direct controls imposed through the conditions they attached to funding, NGOs' international 'partners' also provided training and information about approaches, frameworks and techniques. Labour NGO activists openly acknowledged the impact that their international mentors had on their thinking and approaches, both directly and indirectly. As one activist observed, "Indonesia is strongly influenced by global ideas. Where do you think the books the NGO activists read come from?" (NGO Interview BM, 7 March 2000). The terminology used by labour NGO activists irrespective of their command of English reflects the extent of international influence on the principles that underpinned their programs. Many terms favoured by NGO activists were borrowed directly. These included words such as *fasilitator* (facilitator), *partner* (partner), *hubungan solidaritas* (solidarity relationship), *motivasi* (motivation), *advokasi* (advocacy), *pengorganisasian* (organising), *sosialisasi* (to spread information about something) and *konsern* (to be concerned). Other terms were literal translations of the international vocabulary of NGOs, most notably the ubiquitous *pemberdayaan* (empowerment) and *penyadaran* (consciousness-raising).

As Uhlin (1997: 37, 167–208) has argued, the Indonesian pro-democracy movement to which labour NGOs belonged used a "lesson-drawing approach", adopting, adjusting or rejecting strategies used in other countries according to their suitability to local conditions.[8] The international community that supported labour NGO activities financially and in other ways encouraged two inter-related but discrete frameworks amongst the Indonesian labour NGO community. The first, which was strongest in the international campaigns against sweatshops, envisaged labour rights as part of a broader suite of human rights (for example, United Nations, 1993). The second, promoted by international labour bodies, drew on "social democratic notions of the separation of narrow, trade union, interests from those that [were] more overtly political" (Hadiz, 1997: 149). The meshing of these often incompatible frameworks defined the terms of NGO engagement with labour.

The Development of a Movement

Although some grassroots labour NGOs were active from the 1970s, the number of labour NGOs grew rapidly during the late 1980s and early 1990s, a time that roughly coincided with the period of political 'openness' (*keterbukaan*) that began in 1989 and ended with government intervention in the internal affairs of the Indonesian Democratic Party (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, PDI) and the banning of the news magazines *Tempo*, *Editor* and *Detik* in 1994. As well as expanding their grassroots work, the labour NGO community began to criticise the government publicly on labour issues and to advocate policy change, the Gadjah Tunggal strikes of 1991 marking the beginning of a period of sustained public engagement with labour issues (see Kammen, 1997: 4–15, 174–7). After some of the strikers had been arrested, a group of NGOs made a public statement against the arrests and approached representatives of the Armed Forces in Parliament to protest against military involvement in labour relations. This event marked the beginning of a lengthy campaign against military involvement in labour disputes.

The NGOs involved in the Gadjah Tunggal strikes formed the Solidarity Forum for Workers (Forum Solidaritas untuk Buruh, Forsol Buruh), which then grew into a powerful policy advocacy network. Within a month of the death of worker-activist Marsinah in May 1993, labour NGOs and other labour activists established the Solidarity Committee for Marsinah (Komite Solidaritas Untuk Marsinah, KSUM), which was involved in the investigation and monitoring of the case and in ensuring that it was widely covered in the press (Kusumah, 1993; Yasanti, 1995; YLBHI, 1994).[9] Many of the more than 20 NGOs involved in KSUM were already associated with Forsol Buruh, which ran a broader campaign against military involvement, lobbying against a 1986 Ministerial Decision that permitted military involvement in labour disputes in conjunction with the campaign to bring Marsinah's killers to justice.

Forsol Buruh was also heavily involved in the review of Indonesia's Most Favoured Nation status under the United States' GSP provisions initiated under President Clinton. Between 1987 and 1993, the issue of the GSP was taken up by local labour NGOs as part of a campaign by the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), Asia Watch and the International Labour Rights Education and Research Fund. The campaign focused on

lobbying the United States government to cancel Indonesia's access to Most Favoured Nation status because of labour rights violations. After two short reviews of Indonesia's treatment of labour in 1987–88 and 1989–90, the American Office of the Trade Representative initiated an extended review in August 1992 (Asia Watch, 1993; Government of Indonesia, 1992). Indonesia's labour NGOs provided much of the documentation presented in the petitions given to the United States government and met with the GSP team in Jakarta in late 1993. A year later, the alternative unions and NGOs within Forsol Buruh were involved in further discussions with the review team on its return to Indonesia. A number of labour NGOs then met again with the team in June 1995. Labour NGOs also lobbied the Indonesian government to deal with the GSP review "productively", using the opportunity to implement real change rather than just seeking a "diplomatic solution" (*Kompas*, 10 August 1993). Recommendations from this third review eventually prompted the re-federation of the state-sponsored union in 1993 and the issuing of a Ministerial Decision in 1994 permitting the formation of non-aligned enterprise unions (Glasius, 1999: 141).

Although Forsol Buruh eventually faltered, labour NGOs engaged in many other joint advocacy campaigns in the late 1990s. One of these was the Solidarity Committee for Titi Sugiati (Komite Solidaritas untuk Titi Sugiati, KSTS), another murdered worker-activist whose body was found in a waste disposal area at the factory of PT Kahatex in Bandung on 30 April 1994. The committee formed to pursue her case consisted of representatives of SBSI and 19 NGOs. Other campaigns dealt with broader labour issues including occupational health and safety, child labour and inadequacy of the minimum wage, which received sustained attention from activists throughout the 1990s and was a focus for labour NGO advocacy in 1996–97. The final advocacy initiative of note before the fall of Suharto was the campaign against the draft Manpower Law of 1997 (described in Chapter Seven), which NGOs argued legitimated unfair labour practices established by extra-legal means during the New Order period (Amiruddin and Masduki, 1997). In June 1996 a number of Jakarta-based NGOs established the Commission for the Renewal of Labour Law (Komisi Pembaharuan Hukum Perburuhan, KPHP), which lobbied for the law to be revised. After a brief postponement in April 1997, the bill was brought before Parliament for consideration with considerable fanfare in the June of that year and was passed on 11 September. Presidential approval

followed on 3 October 1997 and the bill was signed into law. NGOs revived their campaign against the law when they later discovered that the Minister for Manpower, Abdul Latief, had used Employee Social Security and Insurance Guarantee (Jaminan Sosial Asuransi Tenaga Kerja, Jamsostek) funds to bribe legislators to pass the draft. The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia, YLBHI) demanded that Latief step down and another legal aid organisation threatened a class action. However, the investigation into the scandal was dwarfed by the rise in unemployment from the end of 1997 and was terminated in February 1998. Debates about the 1997 law continued well into the post-Suharto period but KPHP itself became inactive in the early months of the Habibie presidency when its main figures became heavily involved in campaigns unrelated to labour issues.

Indonesia's Labour NGOs

Indonesia's labour NGOs had a shared commitment to encouraging workers to organise and to improving their access to better wages and fairer working conditions. At the same time, they were highly heterogeneous, ranging from organisations formed by quite conservative ex-trade unionists, to organisations led by worker-activists and human rights activists, to those formed by student groups much further to the left of the political spectrum. In many cases, labour NGOs were established by a charismatic individual, whose presence dominated the organisation. Other NGOs were larger and more professional.

Ideologically, NGOs' engagement with grassroots organising, legal aid or policy advocacy was informed by labourism, human rights, Marxism, feminism or Christian charity.[10] Most of the legal aid bureaux and the grassroots and policy labour NGOs that grew directly out of the student movement were staffed by secular Muslims and Christians, who embraced a humanist, feminist or leftist ideology. However, religious motivations were important for a powerful group of Jakarta-based grassroots labour NGOs linked to the Christian churches and for organisations such as the Independent Women's Foundation (Yayasan Annisa Swasti, Yasanti), a Muslim feminist labour NGO based in Yogyakarta. With regard to ethnic background, most of activists in the NGOs studied were Javanese, Sundanese or Batak, though some came from places further afield such as Sulawesi and East Nusa Tenggara.

Munir and Fauzi Abdullah, two of the most prominent labour NGO activists of the late New Order period, were of Arab-Indonesian background while a third, Surya Tjandra, was Chinese.[11]

The analysis in the chapters that follow is based on a close study of 25 of Indonesia's most influential labour NGOs and the worker-activists and unions associated with them.[12] The labour NGOs examined can be divided into seven broad categories on the basis of their function and composition. Five of these groups — NGOs established by ex-unionists, ex-workers, Christians, students and feminists — engaged mainly in grassroots organising, although some also did policy and research work. In addition, legal aid NGOs with a strong focus on labour were involved in legal aid and advocacy, some alongside intensive programs of grassroots organising. Finally, there were a number of NGOs that focused exclusively on policy advocacy and research, either entirely on labour or on a variety of social issues.

NGOs Established by Ex-Unionists

The first of Indonesia's labour NGOs were established by a small group of disenchanted trade unionists in the late 1970s and early 1980s in direct response to the narrowing of trade union objectives and the imposition of more rigid structures on the trade union movement described in Chapter Three. The two best-known and influential organisations in this category were the Work Guidance Foundation (Yayasan Bina Karya, YBK) and the Foundation for Labour Movement (Yayasan Buruh Membangun, YBM).[13] YBK was established in 1973 in Bandung in response to growing restrictions on the trade union movement in the lead-up to the formation of the All-Indonesia Labour Federation (Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, FBSI). Its members were former shop stewards who had lost their jobs and been arrested because of their union activities. YBK's status as a foundation was formalised in 1980. In the same year, it began a worker cooperative in conjunction with the Institute for Development Studies, an organisation set up by Adi Sasono, who in 1997 became Minister for Cooperatives. YBK established a workers' housing project, building 120 houses in the outskirts of Bandung in just six years (Rofi'ie, 1986). These practical measures were an entrée into worker organising, which also served to mask YBK's attempts to challenge the monopoly of the official trade union. In an interview in 2000, YBK's founders claimed that

its community-based worker groups had some 960 members from 32 factories in West Java.

The Jakarta-based YBM was also established in direct response to the government's one-union policy, under which FBSI, which was structured as a federation of several separate sectoral unions, was replaced by the All-Indonesia Workers' Union (Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, SPSI). YBM, which became active in 1985, grew out of one of FBSI's sectoral unions and had strong links to former members of the Indonesian Socialist Party (Partai Sosialis Indonesia, PSI). According to Tarmono, one of its founding members, YBM's primary aim was to "infiltrate SPSI and improve it from the grass roots" (see also Haruno, 1993). To this end, YBM maintained close connections with reformers in the official trade union movement, including Haruno, another of YBM's founding members, who continued to be active in SPSI. YBM's initiatives included income-generating projects for ex-workers, community worker groups, legal advocacy and training for SPSI members. It also administered a labour news clipping service. After 1994, YBM provided training services on a user-pay basis. In 1998, in the middle of the economic crisis, it participated in the government's Safety Net program, providing training for workers who had lost their jobs.

Both YBK and YBM received some international funding during the New Order period. YBM continued to use the headquarters of the old Metal, Electronics and Machinery Workers' Union (Serikat Pekerja Logam, Elektronik dan Mesin, SP-LEM) and was funded primarily by donations from its founding members and local patrons. However, the German Friedrich Ebert Stiftung provided the core budget for the NGO through its funding of *Problema*, the 60-page compilation of labour news clippings distributed monthly to worker activists, NGOs and other interested parties throughout the 1990s. Like YBK, YBM found it increasingly difficult to gain access to overseas funding after the fall of Suharto and both organisations collapsed within a few years of Reformasi. Aging activists from both YBM and YBK blamed their demise on their inability to understand the priorities of international donors and to use their unfamiliar jargon.

NGOs Established by Former Workers

The Foundation for Service to the Nation (Yayasan Bhakti Pertiwi, Bhakti Pertiwi) and the Bandung Workers' Group (Kelompok Buruh

Bandung, KBB), both formed by ex-workers, also focused primarily on labour organising. Both Bhakti Pertiwi and KBB began life as informal worker groups formed as part of the structural aid initiative adopted by the YLBHI in the 1980s and 1990s. The five ex-workers who established Bhakti Pertiwi in 1985 had collaborated with Fauzi Abdullah, the driving force in the labour program run by the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Jakarta, LBH Jakarta), after they had come to Abdullah for help during the PT Textra case of 1980 (see Ford, 2006a). Upon deciding to form a separate organisation, they adopted an NGO structure in order to facilitate direct access to foreign funding. After its formation, Bhakti Pertiwi retained a close association with the Sedane Institute for Labour Information (Lembaga Informasi Perburuhan Sedane, LIPS), the labour research NGO established by Abdullah in 1992, not long before he left YLBHI. During the Suharto era, Bhakti Pertiwi adopted a very low profile, its members approaching factory workers as individuals rather than as representatives of the organisation. In 1998, Bhakti Pertiwi changed its strategy dramatically by very publicly establishing the Greater Jakarta Labour Union (Serikat Buruh Jabotabek, SBJ) in cooperation with a number of other labour NGOs, including the Outreach Institute of the Jakarta Archdiocese (Lembaga Daya Dharma Keuskupan Agung Jakarta, LDD). Conflict between Bhakti Pertiwi, LIPS and SBJ from 2000 over strategy and leadership led to a split in the union. Bhakti Pertiwi maintained links with the union leaders who remained, but soon after became inactive.

Officially established in 1995, KBB grew out of worker groups sponsored by the Bandung Legal Aid Institute in the early 1990s. The members of KBB, who were all volunteers, were ex-worker activists who had lost their jobs as a result of their involvement in labour organising. Unlike Bhakti Pertiwi, KBB did not have direct access to overseas funding, although it received some financial support indirectly through the Bandung Legal Aid Institute (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Bandung, LBH Bandung). Although they were not comfortable being identified as NGO activists, like other NGOs, KBB was a small, limited-membership organisation that arranged worker education programs and sponsored the formation of grassroots worker groups. When interviewed in early 2000, representatives of KBB indicated that workers associated with one of the KBB-sponsored groups had registered a plant-level trade union in one factory. KBB itself also became inactive within a few years of Reformasi.

Christian Labour NGOs

Christian NGOs also focused on grassroots organising, drawing on concepts of social justice and liberation theology. Some, such as the Outreach Institute of the Jakarta Archdiocese (Lembaga Daya Dharma Keuskupan Agung Jakarta, LDD), had a direct connection with the Catholic Church in the same way church-based NGOs have in countries such as the Philippines and Korea. Others with direct links to churches, like the Jakarta Social Institute (Institut Sosial Jakarta, ISJ) and the Jakarta Workers' Service (Pelayanan Buruh Jakarta, PBJ), worked hard to maintain a strongly secular tone in their labour activism. Others still, such as the Justice and Welfare Forum (Yayasan Forum Adil Sejahtera, YFAS), were overtly Christian in orientation but had less formal links to church structures.

LDD was established as long ago as 1962, providing basic health-care, housing and education for the urban poor in Jakarta. It first became involved with formal sector workers in 1991, when it began to focus on strengthening workers' communities and developing worker networks. LDD initially offered education to Catholic workers but later made its programs available to workers of other faiths. It characterised its approach as a holistic one, seeking to meet the needs of workers in all aspects of their lives. LDD also published a workers' magazine and undertook labour-related research. After the fall of Suharto, worker groups associated with LDD in Tangerang and Bekasi were dissolved into Serikat Buruh Jabotabek, but LDD continued to offer educational services. The content of LDD's programs did not change markedly but the programs were conducted more openly. Although LDD was mostly involved in grassroots organising, it joined in NGO campaigns on a range of issues and was involved in a national forum of labour NGOs associated with the Catholic Church. However, it had few direct international links outside the church.

Established in 1973, the Jesuit-linked Jakarta Social Institute operated at arm's length from the Catholic Church. ISJ was originally involved in labour research and the dispensing of charity to small groups of workers. It became active in labour organising from 1985, the year in which the government replaced FBSI with SPSI. After 1990, ISJ broadened its focus to include the informal sector and the urban poor. Before the fall of Suharto, ISJ used what it called a 'cadre approach', whereby worker-activists were involved in the work of the NGO, specifically the recruitment and training of other worker-

activists. As part of this initiative, it established a series of worker associations called *paguyuban* (a Javanese and Sundanese term for association), which ISJ activists described as an intermediate organisational form between a workers' community group and a union. After the government relaxed its trade union registration policies soon after Suharto's resignation in 1998, ISJ's labour section encouraged the paguyuban to take responsibility for training and organising and move towards registration as plant-level unions. These worker groups later formed an association called the Forum of Workers' Associations (Forum Paguyuban Buruh, FPB), which became involved in advocacy. In 2001, ISJ spun off its labour section as a separate organisation called the Jakarta Labour Institute (Institut Perburuhan Jakarta, IPJ). IPJ continued to be funded by ISJ and was involved in labour education, organising and advocacy until 2003.

The Urban Community Mission of the Batak Protestant Christian Assembly (Pelayanan Masyarakat Kota Huria Kristen Batak Protestan, PMK) is an NGO that operates under the auspices of the Batak Lutheran Church. While PMK had close links to the church and was overtly faith-based, it used a secular human rights approach in its labour work. PMK was founded in 1983 by Indera Nababan, Director of Social Communication Foundation (Yayasan Komunikasi Masyarakat, YAKOMA), an NGO associated with the Indonesian Communion of Churches (Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia, PGI). However, PMK employed Muslims and Christians of other denominations alongside members of the Batak Lutheran Church. PMK had two divisions: a migrant worker division called the Centre for Indonesian Migrant Workers (CIMW), and an industrial labour division, the Jakarta Workers' Service (Pelayanan Buruh Jakarta, PBJ). PBJ provides legal services, runs intensive training workshops on worker rights and leadership, publishes a workers' tabloid and has links with community-based worker groups in a number of areas, mostly in the Greater Jakarta region.[14] These groups did not attempt to form trade unions after 1998, although many of their members have remained actively involved in trade unions in their workplaces. PBJ did not contribute to national-level advocacy campaigns, instead choosing to participate directly in international labour campaigns, particularly the anti-Nike campaign (for example, Urban Community Mission, 1999). Since the fall of Suharto, PBJ has continued to work with trade unionists and worker groups in several areas of Greater Jakarta.

The Justice and Welfare Forum (Yayasan Forum Adil Sejahtera, YFAS), was established in 1988 by activists previously associated with

PMK, including Muchtar Pakpahan. The group registered as a Foundation in 1990. It combined legal aid with organising and educational work (Pakpahan, 1997: 43–4; Yayasan Forum Adil Sejahtera, n.d.) and published a quarterly Indonesian language newsletter that covered a range of social issues including labour. From 1998 YFAS also produced a biannual English-language newsletter in an attempt to engage with the international NGO community. After the fall of Suharto, a number of informal worker groups associated with YFAS registered as independent plant-level unions. By the end of 2002, there were 24 registered plant-level unions in Jakarta, Bekasi and Cikarang associated with a YFAS-sponsored trade union federation called the Association of Independent Labour Unions (Gabungan Serikat Buruh Mandiri, GSBM). YFAS has continued working with these groups, which now have official status as unions.

Sisbikum, whose name is an acronym for Saluran Informasi Sosial dan Bimbingan Hukum (Channel for Social Information and Legal Guidance), was also established in 1988. Like lawyer-activist Muchtar Pakpahan of SBSI, one of Sisbikum's founders, Arist Merdeka Sirait, had previously been active in PMK. Sirait is an unusual figure within the labour NGO community because, in addition to holding tertiary qualifications, he spent time working in a factory before joining an NGO. Saut Aritonang, a former member of the state-sponsored SPSI and one of the founders of Indonesia's first alternative union SBM-SK, was also involved in the establishment of Sisbikum. Sisbikum was involved in legal aid, grassroots organising and worker education — a field in which it was a leader in alternative approaches such as workers' theatre.[15] From the early 1990s it also intermittently published a labour newsletter. Sisbikum was also heavily involved in international campaigning for labour rights and in national labour NGO networks. After the fall of Suharto, some 17 worker groups associated with Sisbikum registered as plant-level trade unions in the textile, garment and footwear sectors and became members of the Association of Independent Labour Unions (Gabungan Serikat Buruh Independen, GSBI). After GSBI broke off its ties with Sisbikum in 2001, Sisbikum itself increasingly focused on child-related issues and less on organised labour.

Student-Based Labour NGOs

Some of the most influential grassroots labour NGOs grew out of the left of the student movement. The Humanika Working Group

(Kelompok Kerja Humanika, Humanika), a Surabaya-based labour NGO, began in 1981 as a study group at Airlangga University. When the study group's members began a worker education and legal aid program in 1983, they adopted their current name, which was chosen to reflect the group's concern with humanity. Under the leadership of Danu Rudiono, Humanika expanded its program to include organisational work and advocacy in the late 1980s and the group registered as a legal entity in 1991. Humanika described its activities as part of a class-based attempt to promote democratisation, which a spokesperson argued, "begins with the democratisation of the unions" (Interview with Humanika activist, 24 February 2000). This emphasis on trade unions is reflected in the fact that even before the fall of Suharto, Humanika-linked worker groups had joined together and collectively adopted the name Regional Labour Union (Serikat Buruh Regional, SBR). While Humanika activists readjusted their priorities in the post-Suharto era, they made little change to their overall strategy. However, like a number of other grassroots NGOs, Humanika did pull back from direct organisational work to concentrate on education and advocacy. They characterised this repositioning as a shift from "facilitating" worker groups to being a "partner" and "supporter" of unions. In 2007, Humanika still existed but had no active programs.

A second student-led NGO of the New Order period was the Foundation for Mutual Progress (Yayasan Maju Bersama, YMB), established by former labour history students from the University of Indonesia in 1986. YMB, which used the political history of Indonesia's working-class movement to encourage workers' awareness of broader contemporary social and political issues, considered itself to be further to the left than most NGOs. In its early years, YMB concentrated on worker education with a strong focus on labour history and politics, but from late 1991 it published a magazine that included pieces written by workers and articles about industrial issues such as strikes and occupation health and safety, in addition to more politically oriented articles. It later also published an English-language newsletter. YMB expanded its activities in 1993, forming worker cooperatives designed to increase members' income and to provide opportunities for worker organising. By 1997 it had effectively disbanded, although a number of its members maintained an interest in broadening workers' understanding of labour history.

The Medan-based Yayasan Kelompok Pelita Sejahtera (KPS), which translates its name in English as Welfare Light Group, was also

positioned to the left of the labour NGO community. KPS, which had its roots in a student study group established in 1990, claims to be the only long-standing NGO specifically focused on workers in Medan, although several other NGOs also dealt with labour issues in that city during the late New Order period. KPS activists' interest in workers arose out of a series of student discussions focusing on the problems brought about by development like social inequality, environmental degradation and the forced requisition of land for development projects. In 1993 KPS was involved in the formation of the Forum for Workers' Aspirations (Forum Aspirasi Kaum Buruh, FAKB), a worker network that had 'contact people' in 42 companies in North Sumatra. Like many other grassroots labour NGOs, KPS took advantage of the changing regulatory climate after the fall of Suharto to encourage the development of independent trade unions, while continuing to offer training, education and advocacy to individual workers and informal worker groups. With its support, FAKB registered as the Independent Workers' Union of Medan Serikat Buruh Medan Independen, SBMI) in 2001. KPS remains very active, although since 2006 its focus has shifted somewhat from industrial labour to agricultural labour.

The most recently established student-based labour NGO is the Arek Surabaya Foundation (Yayasan Arek Surabaya, Arek), formed in 1991. *Arek*, an East Javanese term meaning 'child of' or 'original inhabitant', is an acronym for labour advocacy, research and education (*advokasi*, *riset*, *edukasi*, *ketenagakerjaan*) (Yayasan Arek Surabaya, n.d.). In the 1990s, Arek was involved in both grassroots organising and policy advocacy, promoting labour organising and education at the grassroots level and conducting research, holding seminars and publishing books on labour issues under the leadership of Arief Djati. In the post-Suharto period, worker groups sponsored by Arek formed the People's Labour Union (Serikat Buruh Kerakyatan, SBK). Arek continues to be involved with labour but much less actively than in the past.

Feminist Grassroots Labour NGOs

The final group of grassroots labour NGOs dealt with labour issues from within a wider frame of feminist concerns. While few women's NGOs concentrated on industrial labour, most labour NGOs included 'gender equity' or 'women's issues' as part of their labour programs. What distinguished grassroots women's NGOs from other grassroots NGOs was their view on the relationship between work and other

aspects of women's lives. Whereas most labour NGOs saw women as an important sub-group of the wider category of workers, women's NGOs that dealt with labour issues focused on work as a part of women's overall experience. The two best-known feminist grassroots labour NGOs involved with industrial labour during the late New Order period were the Independent Women's Foundation (Yayasan Annisa Swasti, Yasanti) and the Free Women Foundation (Yayasan Perempuan Mardika, YPM)

Yasanti was established in 1982 by six female students (Kusyuniati, 1998: 311–17). Yasanti began working with rural women in 'traditional' development activities such as skills training and the provision of microcredit, but from the late 1980s, it focused its attention on industrial workers in Central Java in response to the increasing involvement of rural women in factory work. It also helped organise female porters working in the markets of Yogyakarta. Yasanti's long-term goal was to create independent women workers' groups. It had three sub-programs: grassroots organising, publishing and networking. At the grassroots level, Yasanti sought to raise awareness of workers' rights, encourage workers to be critical of their situation, and to establish a pattern of routine meetings amongst small groups of workers. Yasanti's monthly tabloid focused on issues such as the history of worker organisations in Indonesia, patriarchy and its effect on women workers, the role of women in trade unions, the empowerment of women, and women's human rights. Yasanti also published monographs that provided extensive details of the living and working conditions of women workers. It maintained most of its programs after the fall of Suharto.

Unlike Yasanti, which used a Muslim feminist framework, YPM combined its feminist approach with a Marxist analysis of Indonesian society. YPM, which was founded in 1991 by a group of students, chose to target female factory workers rather than other groups of women because its founders believed that industrial workers were the most progressive group in society. Its stated objectives in doing so were to "create critical awareness amongst workers towards structures which oppressed female workers [and to] promote a shift from a system of oppression to a system that strengthened justice, gender equity and democracy" (Yayasan Perempuan Mardika, 1995). The activists in YPM sought to achieve this through their discussions with worker communities about labour law, capitalism and the need for worker organisations and by providing childcare facilities and a workers' theatre program. Differences in opinion about the efficacy of NGOs and the

best way to implement Marxist principles in Indonesia forced the group to disband in 1995 (see also Andriyani, 1996b).

Legal Aid NGOs with a Labour Focus

Legal aid bureaux were another important category of labour NGOs in late New Order Indonesia. Whilst these organisations did not focus exclusively on labour issues, they played a very visible role in labour affairs. Although the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia, YLBHI) and its regional affiliates were not the only legal aid foundations active in labour affairs, they were certainly the most influential.[16] At its peak, YLBHI had 14 regional affiliates, which operated independently but were closely linked. Although different affiliates adopted different strategies with regard to labour, many YLBHI affiliates extended their role from legal aid to public advocacy and labour organising after adopting the principle of structural legal aid in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Sinaga, 1995). YLBHI itself played a coordinating role in several labour campaign coalitions in the 1990s, including Forsol Buruh and the KPHP. It also published a wide range of books and other types of information on labour issues (for example, YLBHI, 1998) and its activities and opinions, as well as those of its affiliates, were frequently reported in the press. After the fall of Suharto, YLBHI and its affiliates experienced funding difficulties and internal conflict, which dramatically affected their level of involvement in labour issues.

The Bandung, Jakarta and Surabaya Legal Aid Institutes were the YLBHI affiliates most actively involved in grassroots organising and advocacy. YLBHI's first foray into labour organising began in 1980 after a number of workers who had been sacked and blacklisted for leading a strike came to the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Jakarta, LBH Jakarta) for help. Those workers, some of whom later established Bhakti Pertiwi, began to collaborate with the LBH Jakarta staff, first running education programs and then organising informal worker groups. LBH Jakarta's direct involvement at the grassroots level decreased after Bhakti Pertiwi was formed and Fauzi Abdullah first moved to YLBHI before leaving the organisation altogether in 1993. From 1993 to 1998, LBH Jakarta worked with other labour NGOs and worker groups such as the Workers' Committee for Reform Action (Komite Buruh untuk Aksi Reformasi, KOBAR), a

leftist grassroots labour network later affiliated with the National Front for Indonesian Workers' Struggle (Front Nasional Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia, FNPBI).[17] After the fall of Suharto, LBH Jakarta continued to offer support to KOBAR and other grassroots labour organisations but its program, diminished by YLBHI's funding crisis, increasingly focused on advocacy, awareness raising, campaigns, training and litigation. A number of staff formerly with LBH Jakarta went on to establish a new labour NGO called the Trade Union Rights Centre (TURC), a labour NGO that combines legal advocacy with training and research. The formation of TURC in 2003 represented the culmination of a long-term plan to establish a training centre that would serve members of many different unions. The new organisation, which received its primary financial support from the Confederation of German Trade Unions (Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB), conducted research and provided legal and trade union training for members of trade unions in several cities in Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi. Unlike older labour NGOs, TURC explicitly positioned itself as both an NGO and as part of the labour movement.

The Bandung Legal Aid Institute (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Bandung, LBH Bandung) was established in 1981 but did not officially open its labour division until eight years later. During the 1990s, LBH Bandung was active in grassroots organising, legal aid and national-level campaigns. It also supported KBB and a range of other worker organisations, including the Labour Education Centre (LEC), adopting a strong class analysis of labour issues within the broader framework of structural legal aid. Other former labour division staff, including the very influential activist Hemasari, went on to work for the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations, playing a decisive role in the establishment of new unions in the hotel and agricultural sectors. With their departure, LBH Bandung's labour division became inactive, although LBH Bandung continued to maintain its informal links with KBB while it was still operating.

The Surabaya Legal Aid Institute (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Surabaya, LBH Surabaya) was established in the late 1970s by the Surabaya branch of the Indonesian Lawyers' Association (Persatuan Advokad Indonesia) before becoming affiliated with YLBHI in 1983. When LBH Surabaya adopted YLBHI's structural aid policy in the late 1980s, it concentrated initially on cases concerning land and the

environment because of their importance in the local context of East Java. However, LBH Surabaya's labour division was soon established by the Malang branch under Munir, who was to become one of Indonesia's best-known labour activists. LBH Surabaya first began to organise worker groups in 1989–90 then played a key role in the campaign that followed the murder of worker-activist Marsinah in nearby Sidoarjo and in campaigns against military involvement in labour relations in the early to mid-1990s. Under the leadership of Munir, its labour division undertook advocacy, litigation and case documentation in addition to grassroots organising. With the help of his offsider, Poengky Indarti, Munir brought LBH Surabaya to the forefront of the alternative labour movement's struggle against the New Order in the mid-1990s, before leaving first to head the Semarang Legal Aid Institute (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Semarang, LBH Semarang) and later to serve as YLBHI's operational manager until 2001.[18] Like many other NGOs involved in grassroots organising, LBH Surabaya stepped back after the fall of Suharto to act as an advisor to independent trade unions and worker groups wishing to register as trade unions. It continued to be heavily involved in campaigns and networking for a number of years. The labour desk continued after Munir and Poengky Indarti left but effectively became inactive because of a lack of funds after the fall of Suharto.

The Legal Aid Bureau of the Indonesian Women's Association for Justice (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan, LBH APIK) was established by seven feminist lawyers in 1996 in Jakarta. Although LBH APIK did not deal exclusively with workers, its labour programs were quite extensive. LBH APIK provided legal aid for poor working women and labour migrants; ran training and empowerment programs for 'strategic' groups (including labour and NGO activists); and was involved in policy advocacy, publication and the provision of information. Before the fall of Suharto, LBH APIK gained access to female workers by collaborating with grassroots labour NGOs. After new legislation on trade unions was passed in 2000, LBH APIK began to work with trade unions, although the substance of its training programs remained the same. LBH APIK also published a quarterly bulletin with funding from USAID and was active in several national labour advocacy networks concerning both factory labour in Indonesia and overseas migrant workers, including campaigns focused on the reproductive rights of female workers, workplace violence, occupational health and safety and Manpower Law No. 25/1997.

Research and Policy NGOs with a Labour Focus

The Sedane Labour Information Centre (Lembaga Informasi Perburuhan Sedane, LIPS) is the only research and policy NGO in Indonesia to focus exclusively on labour. Located in Bogor, LIPS was established in 1992 by Fauzi Abdullah shortly before he left YLBHI. LIPS maintains a research library with a particular focus on labour developments in West Java and runs workshops and seminars for worker activists and labour NGO activists. In the post-Suharto period, LIPS began publishing a quarterly update on labour issues and an Indonesian-language labour journal, to which local and foreign activists and academics contribute. It also conducted research for foreign NGOs such as 11.11.11, an umbrella group of labour organisations, church groups and other groups interested in labour issues in Belgium, and Oxfam. The intensity of LIPS' programs decreased in the early 2000s, when Fauzi Abdullah's health declined to such an extent that he could no longer play an active role in the day-to-day activities of the NGO. However, a new generation of activists have since reinvigorated the organisation.

The large, well-funded research NGO Akatiga (whose name was an acronym for its original address), based in Bandung, initially specialised in research about industrial labour, small business and land issues. Akatiga was established in September 1991, following a series of workshops from 1988 held in conjunction with the Bogor Agricultural Institute, the Bandung Institute of Technology and the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague (Akatiga, 1999). After completing its original project on non-farm labour, Akatiga undertook extensive fieldwork-based research projects. It maintains a research library, provides support for domestic and international scholars and publishes labour-related monographs and other printed materials. It has also participated in a number of national-level advocacy campaigns. After the fall of Suharto, Akatiga was criticised by student groups and other NGOs for taking on projects funded by the World Bank, prompting fears that it would lose its focus on the 'little people'. However, it has maintained a very active research program on industrial labour and labour organising alongside its other areas of focus.

The Lapera Foundation (Yayasan Lapera Indonesia, Lapera) was a small research labour NGO that grew out of a leftist student discussion group in Yogyakarta. Officially established in 1992, Lapera claimed to locate its class analysis in a wider framework of human rights. Lapera focused primarily on researching and publishing about labour and

agricultural issues, primarily because it lacked the funding to establish a field-based program in either area. Its labour specialist spent six months living in the field in Ungaran (the industrial area on the outskirts of Semarang, where Yasanti has also been active) in the late 1990s. Lapera also assembled some training modules for labour activists but did not have the resources to continue either of these programs. Despite having itself experimented with worker education and organisation, Lapera was critical of the efforts of many labour NGOs, arguing that "the middle class had too strong a role in labour" and that "worker organisations must come from the workers themselves" (Yayasan Lapera Indonesia, 1998: 41). The activists in Lapera lacked good connections with international networks, claiming that they could best contribute to the labour movement through their involvement in domestic NGO networks and publishing.

The Institute for Policy and Advocacy (Lembaga Studi Advokasi Masyarakat, ELSAM) was a large and very established human rights policy NGO closely associated with YLBHI, which had been actively involved in publishing and advocacy of labour and women's issues, indigenous rights and pro-democracy groups from the time of its formation in 1993. ELSAM's involvement with labour issues was framed by its understanding of labour rights as a sub-category of human rights (see, for example, Tim Studi ELSAM, 1994). Like most other organisations in this category, ELSAM did not deal directly with workers. However, it provided training and research support to a range of grassroots labour NGOs, including KPS, LBH Bandung and Sisbikum.

Together with their grassroots counterparts, these research and policy NGOs played a decisive role in the reconstruction of the labour movement. As the chapters that follow show, however, this role was both fraught and highly contested.

5

Classical Intellectuals

> In the Suharto era, workers were like babies. They could cry, but they couldn't express their needs and aspirations. That's where NGOs like us came in. We could see the baby's condition and hear its cries — and we knew what it needed. That's why we could speak for workers (NGO Interview AQ, 23 February 2000).

In Indonesia, the life experiences of the working and middle classes are vastly different. This chasm between classes set the tone of the relationship between workers and non-worker labour activists. Students and NGO activists had the capacity to intervene in the Indonesian labour movement precisely because they were educated members of the middle class. Recognising their middle-class, non-worker origins, these individuals shared a belief that, as the "educated group in society", they had "a responsibility to fight to improve workers' conditions" (R.O. Tambunan and M.M. Billah, cited in *Media Indonesia*, 21 July 1995). However, student groups and labour NGOs sought to play different roles in the labour movement, reflecting their different perceptions of the function of labour intellectuals, perceptions that reflected their responses to international theories about the nature and purpose of labour movement organisations. Unlike labour lawyers and other graduates involved in the trade unions of Europe, America or Australia, neither group considered itself to be part of the labour movement. Instead, they saw themselves — and acted — as outsiders who stood apart from the movement, seeking to open workers' eyes to new ways of understanding and drawing public attention to their concerns.

As this chapter shows, the decisions made by non-worker labour groups about their approach to labour organising were determined explicitly or implicitly by their position in the debate between Lenin

and the Revisionists. Student groups, which were the direct inheritors of the Leninist concept of the political party, envisaged their role as 'revolutionary intellectuals'. Labour NGOs also acted as classical intellectuals but not as revolutionaries. The middle-class activists who constituted the majority of labour NGO staff also emphasised the difference between their own class background and the background of workers. These activists did not see themselves as a modern incarnation of a Leninist vanguard party, however, but rather as 'ethical intellectuals', whose activism was driven by a strong sense of duty to the less fortunate members of Indonesian society.

Classical Intellectuals and the Question of Voice

Student groups and labour NGO activists who engaged in the reconstruction of the Indonesian labour movement acted as classical intellectuals, whose belief in their separateness from the workers they championed prevented them from engaging fully in that movement. This classical mode of intellectualism, described in the Introduction, is one in which intellectuals stand apart from the movements they seek to serve, constituting a separate class formation (Eyerman, 1994). By contrast, the 'movement intellectuals' of modern societies are organic intellectuals in the Gramscian sense, either becoming part of a movement or emerging from it.

As Eyerman argues, the classical mode of intellectualism is common in developing country contexts, where there is a vast gap between the educated and uneducated (Eyerman, 1990: 102; 1994: 47). This was certainly the case in Indonesia, as one Surabaya-based NGO activist observed:

> Indonesia's culture tends to be feudal, so educated people have a high status. That's what shaped the relationship between labour NGOs and workers (NGO Interview BW, 7 July 2005).

Like other intellectuals in such situations, labour NGO activists had to do more than simply interpret the social context: they had to provide a language and a vocabulary that make insight possible (Eyerman, 1994: 47).

NGO activists and worker-activists alike believed that the contribution of non-worker intellectuals was vital in a situation where

workers themselves had no time or inclination to consider their own position in society. In the words of one worker-activist:

> Workers need to be encouraged to think about their situation. They work hard all day and don't have any opportunity to think about politics. When they get home, all they do is cook and eat and maybe watch television or listen to the radio. You know what the media is like here! Indonesian *sinetron* (soap operas) are all about rich people, whose way of life is unimaginable for workers. The funny thing is that they don't make workers jealous — they take workers into a dream world, where they think about what they would do if they lived like that. This is the product of 32 years of oppression. Workers don't really understand what inequality means (Worker Interview AL, 20 March 1999).

According to middle-class labour activists, the conditions in which factory workers toiled meant that they had neither the opportunity nor the means to escape their situation. As a result, they did not need intellectuals to provide them with subtle illumination — they needed to have their eyes opened, to be taught and made conscious of their situation so that they could vocalise their interests and establish relations with other workers (NGO Interview AC, 21 March 1999; NGO Interview AM, 12 March 1999; NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000).

The classical intellectualism to which labour NGOs and student groups subscribed is nowhere clearer than in the terms in which they described their relationship with workers. Radical student groups were quick to invoke the Leninist concept of the 'vanguard party', whose task is to free workers from the yoke of false consciousness (Interview with PRD activist, 23 August 1999). Some students aspired to become movement intellectuals, invoking the argument that a 'true' labour intellectual must commit 'class suicide' in order to become a worker and be able to engage fully with workers' struggle (Interview with FNPBI activists, 7 March 2000). In practice, however, very few student activists achieved this aspiration. Students found it no easier to empathise with workers than did their NGO activist counterparts. A worker-activist member of the Partai Rakyat Demokratik (Democratic People's Party, PRD) recalled the names of some members of the party's student wing, the Indonesian Students in Solidarity for Democracy (Solidaritas Mahasiswa Indonesia untuk Demokrasi, SMID), who had succeeded in freeing themselves from their middle-class pretensions. He also described cases in which the students had slept in the workers'

accommodation but bought their food in supermarkets and gone home to bathe. The worker-activist was very critical of this practice as he favoured a different mode of engagement, arguing that students must experience workers' conditions directly — "work, live, eat and bathe with workers" — in order to "truly understand them" and be able to "fight for their rights" (Worker Interview AL, 20 March 1999).

Despite the popularity of Gramscian terminology amongst some sections of the wider Indonesian NGO community, the classical mode of intellectualism dominated labour NGO circles as well. As a Surabaya-based labour NGO activist commented:

> At that time there was a belief that the middle class and the students — the intellectuals — were the ones who knew everything. There was romanticism around how they could improve the conditions of workers, to help workers in their struggle. And workers themselves welcomed NGOs, because they brought new colour to them. Workers, who for all that time had not understood that they had rights, learned about their rights when they got to know the NGOs .... The NGOs helped workers to make the connection. They helped them to learn to think (NGO Interview BO, 30 November 2002).

In fact, just one labour NGO activist invoked a Gramscian definition of labour NGOs' relationship with organised labour during the New Order period. Ironically, this was the same NGO activist who described workers as babies, reliant upon NGOs to interpret their condition and speak for them (NGO Interview AQ, 23 February 2000).

Just as radical students spoke of 'class suicide' on the one hand and the importance of the vanguard party on the other, the language of labour NGO activists reflected an uneasy balance between their rhetorical emphasis on equality and their elevated status as educated members of the middle class. One activist who had been associated with three different grassroots labour NGOs at different times in his career first described the relationship between NGO activists and workers using terms like *fasilitator* (facilitator), *partner* (partner), *hubungan solidaritas* (relationship based on solidarity), *sejajar* (on the same level) and *teman* (friends or colleagues) — terms which suggest an equal relationship. Within minutes, however, the same activist was speaking of NGOs' role in terms of *pengabdian* (service) and *pengarahan* (guidance), describing how workers were to be taught (*diajarin*) (NGO Interview BF, 14 March 2000). On another occasion, an activist from

a policy-oriented labour NGO described the relationship between grassroots NGOs and workers as a patron-client relationship analogous to that of a doctor and patient (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000).

Workers and worker-activists who had contact with labour NGOs also used contradictory terms to describe the relationship between themselves and the NGO activists. Even those who neither spoke nor read English used terms like *fasilitator* and *partner*, clearly reflecting NGOs' promotion of international discourses of equality. Yet worker-activists also regularly invoked other terms, including *pendidik* (educator) and *pembimbing* (mentor or guide), which suggested a different and more hierarchical kind of relationship. The uneasy balance between these two approaches characterised labour NGOs' relationship with workers in which NGO activists sought to improve the lot of workers through a process of 'enlightenment' and 'empowerment', yet justified their 'voicing' of workers' concerns by arguing that workers themselves had no voice and little, if any, awareness of their own interests.

Bridging the Divide

Middle-class students and labour NGO activists struggled in their attempts to communicate with workers as a result of the vast social gap that divided them. One worker-activist reflected on the difference between the approach taken by a radical student group and his own approach to consciousness-raising in these words:

> If you launch straight into philosophical discussions, or just tell workers what is wrong, the workers don't absorb anything. You have to start from the beginning, and find out about their experiences in the factory. At first, workers usually say that "the company is stingy" or "the company is struggling" when you ask them why they think their wages are so low. So then you have to work through the logic of capitalism. I start by asking them, "so how come your boss can eat at a hotel, while you can only afford to eat at the side of the road" — stuff like that. Then I ask them, "How many glasses do you make a day? How much are they worth when they're sold? How much do the materials cost? How much profit is there?" Eventually they can see for themselves how much profit the company makes. Then I ask them, "If it's just because your company is stingy, why is it like that everywhere in Indonesia?" Then I explain that companies want to make big profits and the government wants to encourage foreign investors. I tell them if

> wages increase, the foreign investors will still come to Indonesia, because there will be less industrial unrest and the domestic market will be better (Worker Interview AL, 20 March 1999).[1]

Middle-class activists also recognised the difficulties of bridging the divide. As a grassroots NGO activist observed:

> The problem was that sometimes NGO activists lectured the workers. They thought they knew everything, when really they should also have been learning from them. They should have been learning about the culture of the factories and so on. Sometimes NGO activists weren't aware how arrogant their approach was — it was as if they were on a level higher than a teacher (NGO Interview BW, 7 July 2005).

Many grassroots NGO activists felt they had to learn a new language in order to communicate at all with workers.[2] One lawyer who has been very active at the grassroots in Jakarta over many years explained:

> When I first started working for an NGO, when I had to speak, I just went bang-bang-bang. I thought that they'd understand because we all spoke Indonesian. Then I found out that they didn't. Since then, I've been very conscious that although we all speak the same language, there are many expressions they have never used, that they don't understand (NGO Interview AN, 12 January 2000).

As this observation suggests, some NGO activists learned the language of workers, finding that they could communicate their ideas in terms that workers could grasp. Another long-time grassroots NGO activist, this time from Surabaya, described how she too modified her language:

> For example, if someone was sacked, we'd ask what had happened, if they thought other workers were at risk, and whether their company was repressive. But we wouldn't use the word 'repressive' — that's my word. We'd ask if the company was 'wicked' (NGO Interview BW, 7 July 2005).

Others failed to make adjustments or were simply unaware of the problem, continuing to use language with which workers could not engage.

Worker-activists too were aware of the difficulties of communicating across the class barrier. As a member of an NGO-sponsored union noted, labour NGO activists generally, and policy NGO activists in particular, experienced problems when communicating with workers:

> The problem is that NGO activists have trouble writing in language that workers understand. This is an ongoing issue. The trouble is if they write 'properly' workers can't read it! For example, Akatiga does a lot of research about labour conditions, but it doesn't help us at all, because of the way they write about it. It would be much more useful if we could understand what they wrote (Worker Interview AB, 14 February 2000).

As a result, workers sometimes became "dazed" or "dumbfounded" when they talked to labour NGO activists or read the materials they produced (NGO Interview AS, 19 March 1999).

The Question of Voice

Although basic communication presented challenges, it was the question of voice rather than just communication that lay at the heart of labour intellectuals' approaches to workers in New Order Indonesia. As Spivak (1988: 285) argues, it is important to distinguish between consciousness and conscience, representation and re-presentation when examining intellectuals' representations of the subaltern because there is a difference between rendering the subaltern visible and rendering the subaltern vocal. In New Order Indonesia, labour NGOs attempted to make workers both visible and vocal. Labour NGO activists argued that that they did not just speak for workers. They claimed that at the same time they were countering the New Order's systematic intellectual disempowerment of labour by educating the uneducated and empowering the disempowered.[3]

While policy labour NGOs spoke for workers, grassroots labour NGO activists attempted to develop workers' capacity for independent thinking and to equip them with the language and concepts for understanding their condition and their rights, making it possible for workers to speak for themselves.[4] However, these same grassroots NGOs also spoke as intellectuals on behalf of the workers in the public domain both during and even after the New Order because they believed that workers were not yet ready to represent their own interests. In the words of a Yogyakarta-based feminist activist:

> Worker issues are very complex but workers themselves ... only see the problem of workers and bosses, even though their position cannot be separated from political conditions overall. Workers don't even see that it's important to be involved at the national

> and international level. It would be great if workers could take a position on international policies, but for now it's still the NGO activists who speak for workers, not the workers themselves (NGO Interview AT, 24 February 2000).

Many worker-activists who had extensive contact with labour NGOs agreed with the proposition that labour NGOs still needed to speak for workers. As one worker-activist commented, unprompted, NGOs had been the voice of workers because workers themselves had no voice (Worker Interview AD, 30 June 2001).

Yet an inherent contradiction existed between NGOs' self-designated role as the voice of labour and their attempts to make workers vocal. As cultural commentator, Catholic priest and activist Y.B. Mangunwijaya (1992) observed regarding NGOs more generally, NGO activists' interventions did not always accommodate the interests of those they wished to help:

> Many activists arrive in the style of a guardian angel but, in their praxis, their attitude is the same as that of officials who see themselves as guide/leader or as the main actor in the process of helping the 'little people'. They bring with them a set of ready-to-use norms and recipes.

According to the head of a leftist labour NGO, part of the problem was that Indonesia's public culture has little space for the subaltern. Too much respect, the activist argued, is given to those with titles, and those without high levels of formal education do not feel it is appropriate to speak. As a result, under the New Order:

> NGOs became too dominant. Without being conscious of what they were doing, they limited the space for workers to speak to the level of relationships in the factories — the level to which they have no access. In the wider arena, they competed amongst themselves for the right to speak for labour .... They started off trying to make space for the workers to speak but, perhaps without being conscious of it, they created a situation where only they could become speakers (NGO Interview AG, 25 February 2000).

Ironically, the very same accusations were made by more conservative NGO activists in relation to radical students, who assumed the role of the conscience of labour and attempted to represent workers as a radicalised, revolutionary mass.[5] This tactic was often described by

NGO activists and worker-activists as being in direct contradiction to workers' own desires and self-perceptions (NGO Interview AE, 21 February 2000; Worker Interview AR, 13 March 2001).[6]

This is not to suggest that labour NGO activists were unaware of the tension between speaking for workers and giving them a voice. Labour NGO activists' relationships with workers have long been the subject of self-reflection. As early as 1992, the head of Sisbikum, Arist Sirait Merdeka, argued that NGOs' political interests were very different from those of workers (Sirait, 1992). In interviews conducted almost a decade later, many NGO activists echoed that concern. As a Jakarta-based Catholic NGO activist remarked:

> We are here to empower workers, not to empower ourselves by our relationship with them. We have to be self-critical and ask ourselves in whose interests we're acting (NGO Interview AE, 21 February 2000).[7]

According to another, this time from a Protestant grassroots NGO, "If we're truthful, we have to admit that NGOs have their own interests. We want to empower the workers, but what do the workers want?" (NGO Interview AO, 31 January 2000). In the words of an activist from a Jakarta-based NGO that had strong links with a number of independent worker groups:

> Workers have insights into their condition that outside intellectuals do not ... we claim to see something they do not see, but we have to remember that they see things we cannot (NGO Interview BK, 7 March 2000).

At their most successful, grassroots labour NGO activists succeeded in helping workers become vocal, encouraging them to organise in factories and represent themselves in negotiations with employers, before industrial relations tribunals and in courts of law. At their least successful, labour NGOs created asymmetrical relationships, which NGO activists themselves described as relationships of subordination, in which workers were cast as "weak objects" who needed help because "they could not achieve anything by themselves" (NGO Interview BR, 12 December 2002).[8] In almost all cases, however, NGO activists saw themselves as classical labour intellectuals who supported workers from outside the labour movement rather than from within.

Between Revolutionary and Ethical Intellectuals

The middle-class backgrounds of labour NGOs and student groups set both groups apart from their working-class constituencies but their motivations for engaging with the labour movement were quite different. Influenced by classical Marxist theory, radical student groups saw labour organising as a means of guiding the proletariat to a realisation of their historic mission.[9] They argued that the political and industrial functions of the labour movement were inseparable and that trade unions must be a site of direct political struggle under the direction of a vanguard party. As a result, radical student groups argued that they must "mentor" workers, whose "ability to think" is "different", in order to "guide" them to an understanding of "the logic of capitalism and their position in relation to their bosses" (Interview with FNPBI activists, March 2000). By contrast, and with very few exceptions, Indonesia's labour NGO activists accepted the Social-Democratic model of trade unionism that grew out of the Revisionist tradition, in which the industrial and political functions of the labour movement were pursued separately, and in which workers could ultimately improve their position within society. As one Surabaya-based NGO activist observed:

> FNPBI believed that students had to play the main role as the class that can free the workers from oppression. That's the difference. We believed that it was the workers themselves who could change their own fate (NGO Interview BW, 7 July 2005).

This understanding coloured NGO activists' interpretations of their function as 'ethical intellectuals', in which their activism was primarily defined by its moral dimension.[10] These differing beliefs about their purpose, their relationship to workers and the nature of class divided the oppositional labour movement and shaped the role of students and labour NGOs in the re-emergence of an independent labour movement in Indonesia.

Continuing Relevance of the Debate

During the New Order period, Leninist and Revisionist concepts of the relationship between trade unions and revolutionary labour intellectuals were explicitly invoked by students and labour NGO activists,

a tendency that has been noted in some other studies. For example, the feminist labour NGO activist-turned-scholar Kusyuniati explicitly invoked Marxist principles when discussing the role of student groups and labour NGOs in the labour movement (Kusyuniati, 1998: 281). The ongoing currency of this debate was also demonstrated by the use of both *Revisionis* (Revisionist) and *Reformis* (Reformist) as derogatory terms amongst radical students and some NGO activists in the 1980s (NGO Interview BT, 5 December 2001). Then in the 1990s the PRD consciously used the rhetoric of the vanguard party, clearly distinguishing itself in this way from its 'Revisionist' counterparts. As Hadiz (1997: 154) has described, citing a speech by Dita Sari and a publication of the Indonesian Centre for Labour Struggle (Pusat Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia, PPBI):

> PPBI intends to educate workers in "political economy", in order to "promote an understanding of the political basis of economic exploitation and of the inter-relatedness of narrow economic struggles with political ones". The reasoning seems to be that because working-class consciousness is still at too low a level, a vanguard of middle-class radicals, who have "a theoretical understanding", must provide "direction, encouragement and education".[11]

The worker-activist closely associated with the PRD made similar claims in discussions of the role of trade unions (Worker Interview AL, 20 March 1999). When asked what he believed an ideal union to be, he argued that trade unions must be capable of fighting for workers' rights but they did not necessarily have to be established by workers. In doing so, he thereby clearly indicated his acceptance of the PRD's vanguard role in the labour movement and his rejection of the Revisionist concept of worker-only unions.

Unlike leftist student activists, who argued that political parties must provide leadership and direction for trade unions in order to achieve wider political goals, most labour NGO activists believed that a trade union was the primary vehicle for advancing the economic interests of workers — perhaps in association with a labourist political party but always free from its control. Although labour NGO activists did not describe themselves as Revisionists, the majority of labour NGO activists identified an ideal union as a 'pure' trade union formed by workers for workers and which concentrated on improving wages and conditions, or at most sought to influence national-level labour policy.

In fact, only a small number of labour NGO activists supported a political role for labour, even in the early years after the fall of Suharto. The majority asserted that trade unions were most effective when acting independently of a political party.

Tensions between the revolutionary ambitions of the student activists and the evolutionary approaches favoured by labour NGOs were articulated in the tactics they adopted and in their evaluations of the tactics of others.[12] Members of the labour organisations associated with the PRD argued that NGOs 'sold' workers for project funding and accused them of attempting to mollify rather than encourage worker militancy. Commenting on labour NGOs in 1995, the leader of PPBI, Dita Sari, wrote that:

> NGO activists have established a worker basis but they still engage in 'reformist' NGO programs and 'cut off' workers' radicalism that threatens their 'patch'. There are even many who have 'progressive theories' but in practice reject militancy and mass action. How could this happen? Because they don't want to acknowledge that *the growth of the labour movement has both quantitatively and qualitatively exceeded the development of labour activists' organisations* [emphasis in original].
>
> At this time, NGOs are not effective weapons in the workers' struggle. Unions are effective weapons to improve the quality of the workers' struggle. But why is there no bravery from those who say they 'side with workers'? It can be honestly answered that ... it is because they do not want to lose the 'benefits' and privileges that they have gained.... They are afraid to go along with the objective condition of 'worker militancy' because they will lose the privileged position they have established (Dita Sari, 1995: 92).

The ongoing currency of this position within PRD was confirmed in interviews in 1999 and 2000. According to one PRD member, labour NGOs were not prepared to go the whole distance: they exploited worker organisations for research, accepting payment but offering only armchair analysis in return (Interview with PRD activist, 23 August 1999). In interviews conducted in 2000, activists from PPBI's successor, the National Front for Indonesian Workers' Struggle (Front Nasional Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia, FNPBI), emphasised NGOs' dependence on donors. For example, when asked if student activists could remain true to their principles if they joined an NGO, one FNPBI activist replied that:

> Perhaps their heart could remain idealistic, but their actions could not, because they would be constrained by interests of funding [donor agencies] (Interview with FNPBI activists, 7 March 2000).[13]

Activists from FNPBI also condemned the influence that NGOs' dependence on external funding had on the worker groups that they sponsored, arguing that the Indonesian Prosperous Trade Union (Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia, SBSI) and FNPBI, both of which they described as "alternative unions", were different from NGO-sponsored worker groups. They claimed that the latter, which they called *anak LSM* (lit. 'children of NGOs') were only interested in "economism" because of the dictates of donor interests (Interview with FNPBI activists, 7 March 2000). This was so, they argued, because NGOs had simultaneously pushed workers to act and discouraged them from acting: "NGOs injected workers with bravery, but they also injected them with fear, so the workers became indecisive" (Interview with FNPBI activists, 7 March 2000).

A small number of leftist labour NGO activists echoed the concerns of radical student groups about the methods of their more centrist colleagues. According to one such activist:

> Labour NGOs had a strong effect on the people with whom they came in direct contact ... but they achieved nothing on a macro level, because they could not make up their mind if they were opposition or not (NGO Interview AG, 25 February 2000).

In the words of another, "NGOs have had a role in changing public discourse, but they have not brought real change in labour issues — it was the students who committed class suicide and became workers ... who really brought change" (NGO Interview AJ, 23 March 1999). A similar criticism was made by one of the two NGO activists who stated that NGOs had not made a positive contribution to the reconstruction of the labour movement. He argued that labour NGOs were "an obstacle to democratisation", which distracted workers from their "true struggle" by involving them with income-generating projects and by creating relationships of patronage. While he maintained that "true consciousness" resided in parts of the middle class, he claimed that NGOs had difficulty "really opposing capitalism" because of their reliance on donors and were therefore not a vehicle through which that consciousness could be channelled (NGO Interview AH, 26 February 2000).

More middle-of-the-road NGO activists were just as critical of the 'revolutionary' tendencies of the radical student groups, accusing them of using workers for their own political purposes. For example, one senior grassroots NGO activist commented that while radical students were more than willing to meet with workers, even saying that they "wanted to relinquish their class interests", in practice such meetings did not always meet worker expectations:

> The workers and ex-workers were disappointed because the students didn't fulfil their promises. They only wanted to talk about theory — Marxist theory. The workers actually liked those lessons, but when they wanted to talk about their experiences in the field, the students didn't turn up. So that was it. The workers were angry that the students didn't come or, when they did come, they came with their own agenda. It was a mess (NGO Interview AL, 8 March 2000).

Similarly, an activist from a Catholic NGO in Jakarta complained that radical student groups believed they had a "monopoly on truth about labour" (NGO Interview BK, 7 March 2000).

Most NGO activists were disapproving of what they saw as the willingness of students and leftist labour NGOs to promote mass action at the expense of workers' well-being. The Jakarta-based activist described the difference between groups that used workers in their broader campaigns and those that focused on the wages and conditions of workers and on developing worker solidarity in the factories. He characterised this distinction as being the difference between radical student groups and NGOs that *garap isu* (lit. 'to rake up rumours'), on the one hand, and NGOs that sought to *membuka wawasan* (broaden horizons), on the other. An activist from another Christian grassroots labour NGO contrasted the worker-centred activities of their labour NGO with the theory-centred approach of more radical groups, claiming that the difference lay in the attitudes activists bring to their interactions with workers:

> We believe we should be learning from [the workers]. Some people come and say, "It has to be this way. The theory says this, this and this." We don't come with the concept that "you have to be this and this and this".... We come and see and listen (NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000).

NGO activists were particularly critical of the PPBI and its successor, which they felt used workers for 'political' purposes rather than seeking to act as a 'true' trade union. As the scholar-activist Kusyuniati observed, many NGO activists believed the PPBI was "too radical and that their critiques of the government and the military were too vulgar" (Kusyuniati, 1998: 305–06). In her study of labour activism in the late New Order period, Kusyuniati echoes a common NGO critique as part of a list of PPBI's shortcomings:

> PPBI always raised more broad political demands in its demonstrations, in a context where the political consciousness of workers was very low and still dealt with 'bread and butter' issues. Where such political demands are projected as more important than labour issues, the PPBI might be accused of using the workers to support their own political objectives .... The PPBI was more interested in strikes than in building up the labour movement which requires commitment to a long-term objective (Kusyuniati, 1998: 303–04).

According to many NGO activists, this overtly political approach not only caused problems for individual workers but also harmed the development of the oppositional labour movement as a whole. A Surabaya-based NGO activist recalled:

> I remember one case where everyone was sacked and management brought in thugs with machetes. So many of the workers were injured and the PPBI activists just ran away.... Cases like that traumatised workers and made them very conservative. So instead of turning to other independent unions, they went back to SPSI. PPBI didn't just wreck it for themselves, they wrecked it for everyone (NGO Interview BW, 7 July 2005).

For many NGO activists, the issue was a moral one. They argued that having "fired up" (*mengompori*) the workers and having put them at risk of being sacked, leftist NGOs and student groups just moved on, leaving the workers to face the consequences (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000).[14] Some labour NGOs even saw themselves as exercising a moderating influence on worker militancy, much as members of the PRD and leftist labour NGOs had suggested. According to an activist from a grassroots NGO with a strong reputation for its engagement in street protest:

> Sometimes the worker groups are too hasty. They misunderstand. They're not scared to take any risk — they just want to stage a demonstration or a strike. We keep explaining that strikes are a form of pressure to achieve negotiation, but sometimes they only half get it.... Meanwhile the risks of action are clear. They can lose their jobs. That's a high price to pay. We tell them they should only strike when there's no other way (NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000).

A worker-activist associated with another Jakarta-based labour NGO offered a similar interpretation, arguing that outside guidance and support was necessary because:

> Sometimes workers just get radical. They don't emerge with clear concepts because they don't really understand the issues (Worker Interview AA, 31 January 2000).

Thus in the eyes of most labour NGO activists, student groups were too ready to impose their theories on workers and to ignore workers' own needs and wants. Although many NGO activists were committed to labour militancy, most distanced themselves from the radical position by arguing that the task at hand was not for middle-class activists to enter the factories nor to prevent worker-activists from leaving them. For them, ideas of class suicide and of non-workers with working-class consciousness simply obscured the difficulties in bridging the cultural divide between the working and middle classes (for example, NGO Interview AN, 12 January 2000).

Critiques of the Leninist overtones of the radical position sometimes also came from within the Left itself. Commenting on the position of NGO activists associated with the Foundation for Mutual Progress (Yayasan Maju Bersama, YMB), Nori Andriyani, a self-professed Marxist feminist and one of the founders of the Free Women Foundation (Yayasan Perempuan Mardika, YPM), has written that YMB activists:

> ... doubt that the Indonesian workers can develop a political consciousness of their own. They suggest that since the progressive left trade unions have been banned and that there is no freedom to organize, there is no agency that can provide political education to the workers. They argue that "never in the history of any society of the world has workers' consciousness developed on its own" (Andriyani, 1996a: 30).

Having pointed out the Leninist influences on this position, Andriyani argued that the commitment to a revolutionary Socialist party:

> ... is detrimental to the labor movement itself because the very idea inhibits the political potential of the worker-activists to develop, and will only justify the dependency [sic] of worker-activists on the labor NGO activists of middle class origins (Andriyani, 1996a: 31).

Andriyani's stance, which she confirmed again some years later, suggests that she, like many of her more conservative colleagues, had rejected Leninist arguments for the vanguard party in favour of a worker-led labour movement (Interview with Nori Andriyani, 29 March 1999).

These disputes over the values espoused by activists supporting the radical and Revisionist positions were underpinned by a shared acknowledgment of the divide that separated them from the working class. Just as the New Order maintained Leninist categories of analysis while rejecting the premises that accompanied them, students and NGO activists debated the relative merits of their tactics within a shared discursive framework in which they positioned themselves as classical, middle-class intellectuals whose interests were necessarily different from those of workers.

Class Consciousness and Class Suicide

For radical student groups and leftist NGO activists, a solution to the problem of conflicting class interests could be found in the notion of 'class suicide', being the conscious denial of one's middle-class origins in the interests of thorough integration with workers and their class interests. In the view of an activist from a leftist student-based NGO, in practice this required as little as hiding one's identity:

> When we mix with workers, we don't tell them we belong to an NGO, because if you tell workers you're a student or an NGO activist, they think you are clever, that you understand everything. Then they'd want to make you leader. This means you haven't really committed class suicide. You don't really want to educate workers to the point where they can take control (NGO Interview AH, 26 February 2000).[15]

For others, including the radical student groups that most strongly advocated it, 'class suicide' was much more transformative, following

the example of the head of PPBI, Dita Sari, who left university to work in a factory, embracing a new working-class identity.

Although many student activists themselves faced difficulties in their attempts to emulate Dita Sari's example, they were quick to condemn labour NGO activists for their reluctance to relinquish their middle-class position and for their rejection of revolutionary principles. Indeed, activists from the FNPBI argued that this was the defining difference between labour NGOs and radical student groups (Interview with FNPBI activists, 7 March 2000). Significantly, the converse position, whereby worker-activists themselves joined an NGO, was deemed unacceptable by radical students and many leftist and middle-of-the-road NGO activists. This phenomenon is referred to as *naik kelas*, a term that literally means to pass exams and go up a level at school but in this context implies upward class mobility. Both students and NGO activists expressed a fear that worker-activists who became closely associated with an NGO would no longer want to work in factories, preferring instead to be full-time activists (Interview with PRD activist, 23 August 1999; NGO Interview BE, 20 February 2000).[16] Student activists were particularly vociferous in their condemnation of such worker-activists, whom they accused of "betraying" their class origins regardless of whether or not they remained active in the labour movement (Interview with FNPBI activists, 7 March 2000).

Other NGO activists believed that non-workers could develop class-consciousness without committing class suicide. For example, an activist from one student-based NGO in Surabaya argued that non-workers could have (working) class consciousness, whilst many workers did not (NGO Interview BD, 19 February 2000). But even those NGO activists who believed that in theory it was possible for non-workers to develop working-class consciousness acknowledged that this seldom occurred. For example, a prominent West Java-based labour NGO activist argued that non-workers could not truly share the experience of being a worker, even if they performed working-class work. As a result:

> Even the very few non-workers who really observe the conditions of workers don't necessarily absorb them. Amongst those who do, there is still no guarantee that they share workers' interests, because feelings of pity are not a form of class-consciousness (NGO Interview AL, 8 March 2000).

The majority, however, saw themselves as irrevocably separate from the workers whom they wished to serve and support.

Some NGO activists were uncomfortable with such separateness. Others believed that it was a natural and necessary part of the NGO-worker relationship. According to an activist from a Catholic labour NGO, distance between workers and labour NGOs was both important and desirable. Describing the role of his own NGO, he observed:

> Since the beginning we have always maintained a distance from the workers we have assisted. In other words, our role has only been to provide education and training, the equipment necessary for meetings, and publications. We have sought to prepare workers who are capable of leadership and critical thought, and who are independent and self-sufficient.... We have tried to minimise the dependence of workers and worker organisations on the NGO that 'facilitates' them (NGO Interview BK, 7 March 2000).

In the words of an activist from a legal aid bureau, "NGOs are interested in *pendampingan*, which is different from being part of a labour movement" (NGO Interview AJ, 23 March 1999). This idea of *pendampingan* is one of the most common concepts used to describe the NGO-worker relationship in Indonesia. Its root, *damping*, means 'close' or 'near' and its most common verb form, *mendampingi*, means 'to accompany', 'to stand beside' or 'to assist'. NGO activists who speak English most often translate it as 'to accompany', a translation that fails to capture the nuances of the Indonesian term which, in the context of NGOs' relationship with workers, has strong overtones of 'assistance', and often of 'supervision' and/or 'guidance'. As its usage suggests, the concept of *pendampingan* has clear classical overtones.

Tarmono, Head of the Foundation for Labour Movement (Yayasan Buruh Membangun, YBM) and a former trade unionist, described this classical relationship between workers and labour NGO activists succinctly:

> We're not workers, but we voiced the concerns of the workers because workers themselves did not have a voice. What we said came from our observations of what workers experienced, not directly from those workers' own experiences. Although we can't be sure that we really represented their interests, we, as intellectuals (*kaum intelektual*), understood workers' lives and knew that workers need solidarity. If there is no-one to voice workers' concerns, no-one to act as a beacon, then workers will never get over their fear of organising (Interview with Tarmono, 4 January 2000).

When describing themselves, the majority of activists did not use the word 'intellectual' (*cendekiawan* or *intelektual*).[17] Instead, they used 'middle class' (*kelas menengah*), 'non-worker' (*non-buruh*/*bukan buruh*) and 'outsider' (*orang luar*). However, all NGO activists saw the degree to which workers' conditions were 'intellectualised' as the most important difference between workers and non-workers. In the words of another Catholic NGO activist:

> We don't see what they see because our material conditions are different. They see from their hearts and their stomachs. We see from our heads (NGO Interview BA, 3 March 2000).

As statements like this suggest, NGO activists, like their student counterparts, were convinced of their status as classical labour intellectuals.

Just Intellectuals?

The degree to which labour NGO activists accepted Revisionist principles about worker groups and trade unions, and their own outside status, was demonstrated in the firm distinction they drew between labour NGOs, worker groups and independent unions and in their insistence that they were intellectuals and not workers. Yet unlike the student activists, who clearly stood apart from blue-collar workers unless they committed 'class suicide', NGO activists occupied an ambiguous position in regard to their employment status.

Most NGOs advertised positions and distinguished between 'volunteers' and 'staff'. For some activists, NGO work was clearly a form of employment. When asked about her status in the year 2000, a recent recruit to one Jakarta-based grassroots labour NGO argued:

> We're workers — we should get together and fight for our rights. If we don't get decent working conditions, it means that we're oppressed too. We work, and there's a management team. We have rights and duties. We have the duty to come here; we can't be late. And we're scared of our boss. What's so different between us and factory workers? I am a worker who has a boss (NGO Interview BC, 31 January 2000).

The attitude of individual NGO activists towards their status depended primarily on whether they saw themselves as workers. According to a member of a legal aid NGO:

> It is difficult to make a definite statement on whether NGO activists are workers or non-workers. You need to look at the context. If you consider it from the perspective of the work relationship, then activists/NGO workers (*pekerja NGO*) can be called workers (*buruh*). This is because NGO workers are [employed by] a Foundation or NGO. Thus, from a managerial or administrative perspective on the work relationship, they can be called workers. This has implications for the pressures of work, dismissal and so on. However, from the perspective of interests, NGOs do not struggle for or represent the interests of their own class; they focus on the interests of a different class, the class of the oppressed (NGO Interview BS, 12 December 2002).

But while the majority of labour NGO activists were employed and paid by the Board or Director of an NGO, few used this as a basis to claim worker status because most activists did not see themselves as workers. NGO work is a hybrid form of activity, whose participants are both activists and employees. As an activist from another legal aid NGO reflected:

> We didn't want to just be lawyers who stood beside our clients in court. We wanted to educate the workers, to teach them to defend themselves (NGO Interview BW, 7 July 2005).

For these activists, there remained a certain ambivalence. Even the most committed labour activists were conscious of the material sacrifices activism required of those involved in NGO work and not all were willing to accept those sacrifices.[18] For example, an activist from a Christian labour NGO who had proclaimed his commitment to a 'service' model of NGO activism also commented:

> I don't feel as prosperous here as staff in other labour NGOs. I'm only human, aren't I? I'm the coordinator here, but what facilities do I get? In other groups, the facilities are much better (NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000).

Labour relations issues such as these were more often a matter for controversy in big NGOs than in smaller organisations. Informal lunchtime conversations observed at one large NGO confirmed the importance of working conditions in NGO settings. Over lunch, staff discussed their levels of pay, the adequacy of those levels of pay and their appropriateness in relation to the size of funding proposals made by the NGO to its donors and the degree of management's control

over the direction of the various departments in the NGO. Some of those present were unhappy with what they perceived to be poor levels of pay and excessive management control.

The situation for activists in smaller NGOs was both less evident and less negotiable because they had little chance of changing their conditions of employment. According to one activist who had considered the issue in some detail:

> Only BINGOs [Big NGOs, English in the original] have clear staffing systems and clear rights to wages, job security and pensions. Workers in small NGOs have no recourse if the NGO where they work closes down. It would be difficult to establish a formal union in these NGOs because many of them do not meet the minimum criterion of ten workers. Most NGO workers have a two- to three-year contract, so they are reluctant to organise themselves, but there are some cases in NGOs that indicate a need for a union, where sacked workers have been forced to fight for their rights individually through the courts (NGO Interview AC, 21 March 1999).

According to the same activist, however, there are difficulties in defining NGO activists as workers even in big NGOs because the status of NGO staff is clearly not that of waged workers. "It comes back", he said, "to the question of what is a worker — there is no shared understanding of that term."

The question of whether or not NGO activists were workers first became a matter for public debate in the mid-1990s when some NGO activists moved to form a trade union after the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation became the site of serious industrial unrest in February 1994, when its white-collar workers went on strike to demand better wages and conditions, and in 1996, when 200 employees of the bank again struck and were sacked. Such moves were strengthened when conflict arose over the sacking of activists at the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia, YLBHI) in the mid-1990s (NGO Interview BQ, 11 March 1999). The possibility of forming a trade union for NGO activists was also discussed at a seminar entitled the 'Significance of Labour Unions for Non-profit Organisations' held at the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute in 1997. At this seminar, some participants argued that NGO activists needed a trade union because they had no legal protection against unfair dismissal or the payment of inadequate wages. Others thought

unionisation was impossible because of the activist nature of NGO work. A newspaper report on the meeting concluded that conflict had arisen in NGOs because the relationship between staff and the NGO boards "is no longer just based on idealism, but is now coloured by a pattern of 'boss' and 'subordinate'" (*Kompas*, 15 November 1997).

These debates about the status of NGO activists continued into the post-Suharto period. In late 2001 Munir, who had served for many years on the labour desk at the Surabaya Legal Aid Institute (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Surabaya, LBH Surabaya), called for the government to protect *pekerja HAM* (human rights workers). His decision to use the word *pekerja* rather than *aktivis* — or for that matter *buruh* — indicates that at least some NGO activists considered themselves workers, while acknowledging that the blue-collar/white-collar divide encapsulated in the terms *pekerja* and *buruh* remained strong (*Kompas*, 13 November 2001). Over half a decade later, 'workers' (*pekerja*) at the Bandung-based research NGO Akatiga went on strike, demanding clear role descriptions, fair wage-setting and transparent allocation of study allowances ("Press Release Pemogokan Pekerja Yayasan Akatiga", 2007).

The majority of labour NGO activists, however, continued to refute claims that they were workers or that NGOs were workplaces. As one Catholic grassroots NGO activist noted, labour NGOs were generally considered to be "organisations based on concern and on humanitarian and intellectual ambitions about the existing labour situation, which they realise through their organisational programs" (NGO Interview BA, 3 March 2000). As this suggests, most activists saw their work as a "calling" (*panggilan*) or as "service" (*pengabdian*): they sacrificed the rewards of a self-centred career for the other-centred satisfaction of promoting justice and democracy (NGO Interview AZ, 24 March 1999).[19] Reflecting the feelings of many NGO activists, one long-standing activist noted:

> NGO activists are not workers. There is no employer-employee relationship and the work of NGO activists is humanitarian work. The desire to become engaged in activism is fuelled by an ideological awareness of the need to help the oppressed. I would not have become an activist if I didn't have that awareness. When I became an NGO activist, I understood all the risks and consequences of doing so. These included the risk of facing the military and of not receiving adequate financial consideration for my efforts. NGO activists who feel they are workers are not sincere in their work.

> They should look for a job that pays better! When NGO activists consider themselves workers, it destroys their activist spirit, and they are no longer truly militant. It leads to corruption, to acceptance of bribes from employers or to just seeking popularity for themselves and so on (NGO Interview BO, 30 November 2002).[20]

Such opinions confirm that most labour NGO activists believed they were outsiders rather than individual members (as workers or as intellectuals), let alone an institutional part, of the labour movement. This belief was reflected in the strength of NGO activists' criticisms of the ongoing involvement of Muchtar Pakpahan as Chair of SBSI. As Tom Etty of the Dutch Trade Union Federation confirmed in 1994, labour NGOs:

> ... hold the view that setting up a union and being active in it is only workers' business. They are, for that reason, very critical vis-à-vis the trade union movement as it manifests itself currently in Indonesia: 'outsiders' play the leading role there. Clearly, their main target is the SPSI. But remarkably enough some of them are also somewhat weary [sic] of the SBSI, whose General Chairman is a lawyer by profession (Etty, 1994: 9).

Pakpahan's role as Chair of SBSI presented a dilemma for the union's founders. According to Amor Tampubolon, the head of the NGO to which Pakpahan had previously belonged, Pakpahan was intended to be only a short-term, transitional leader and was wrong to have continued in that role (Interview with Amor Tampubolon, March 1999). Tampubolon's reaction to the SBSI case reflected the consensus among labour NGOs on the role of intellectuals in labour organisations. NGO activists generally accepted that it was necessary for "outsiders" to be involved in the setting up of trade unions because "workers cannot do it on their own" (NGO Interview AZ, 24 March 1999). At the same time, however, they saw the continued involvement of outsiders as both unnecessary and undesirable.

One reason identified for the necessity of worker-only trade unions, given in a comment made verbatim by two activists from two different labour NGOs, was that trade unions were better able to understand workers' needs than NGOs because "NGOs don't live side by side with the workers, whereas unions do" (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000; NGO Interview AU, 4 January 2000). Another NGO activist put his views on the question of middle-class involvement in trade unions even more baldly:

> The middle class is too dominant in labour, so we don't want to add to it. Worker organisations should be organised by workers for workers themselves. We want to open their eyes, but then release them (NGO Interview AH, 26 February 2000).

For this activist, like many others, the marriage of his Revisionist conception of trade unionism and his position as a classical labour intellectual then meant that he could see no long-term role for activists like himself.

Labour NGOs' overwhelming support for worker-led unions did not mean that they fully accepted the New Order's economistic, apolitical version of trade unionism. As one NGO activist noted, echoing the sentiments of the majority of NGO activists:

> The trade union's function is to defend the rights of workers ... but that cannot happen in the factory alone because workers' interests are not confined to the factory (NGO Interview AU, 4 January 2000).

Yet while labour NGO activists did not dispute workers' right to be political, or their own right to speak politically on behalf of workers, they doubted their own right as intellectuals to claim a permanent place in a labour movement that they believed should ultimately be by, for and of workers.

6

The View from Inside

During the late New Order period, labour NGOs and worker-activists alike characterised the contribution made by labour NGOs to the reconstruction of the labour movement primarily in terms of NGO activists' identity as non-workers. Labour NGO activists believed they could help workers because they had access to knowledge and resources that workers did not have — resources available because of their privileged position as members of the educated middle class. At the same time, they believed they could not be a true part of the labour movement because they were non-workers who could sympathise with workers' travails but could never truly share them. When describing their own shortcomings, NGO activists portrayed these in terms of the difference between the interests of workers and their own interests as outsiders — an understanding that reflected both the gap between the working and middle classes more generally and a very conservative, trade union-centred interpretation of the composition of the labour movement.

NGOs' status as institutional outsiders affected both their role in the labour movement and their assessments of that role. Their contribution was limited by the importance they placed on their status as non-worker intellectuals and by their interpretation of what that 'non-worker' status meant. Worker-activists for their part also saw NGO activists as non-worker intellectuals who could not fully understand the experiences of blue-collar workers. Yet because many worker-activists did not share the narrow, trade union-centred definition of the labour movement favoured by NGO activists and the New Order regime, they were less convinced that non-workers had no long-term role to play. Indeed, for many worker-activists, the unwillingness of labour NGOs to participate fully in the labour movement was not a matter

of their keeping an appropriate distance but rather a failure to meet their obligations as part of the labour movement. This chapter explores the views of NGO activists and worker-activists about the contribution NGOs made to the reconstruction of the labour movement and the limits of that contribution, explaining the extremely complicated relationship between the NGOs and Indonesia's workers and worker-activists that evolved as a result of different expectations of the terms of NGO involvement and the extent of their commitment to the labour movement.

NGO Activist Views

Labour NGO activists believed they had made an important contribution to the reconstruction of the labour movement in the late New Order period. They used words and phrases like 'dominant', 'very important', 'influential', 'prominent' — even 'heroic' (*heroik*) — to describe their role. Policy labour NGOs felt they had used their connections with the media, sections of the political elite and international lobby groups to influence government policy and thus improve workers' conditions. Their grassroots counterparts believed their intervention in labour organising had been necessary because workers could not have challenged the system without them.

When asked why NGOs had become involved in the labour movement, NGO activists invariably drew attention to the rapid rise in the number of industrial workers in Indonesia in the 1980s and 1990s and to the difficulties those workers had faced. They explained how the majority of these newcomers to the factories came from rural backgrounds and received no preparation for the workforce through their schooling or from the official union or the Department of Manpower (NGO Interview AE, 21 February 2000).[1] NGO activists believed that their involvement was necessary because "workers are busy with their own situation and don't always see the importance of looking beyond that" (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000). As a result, the NGO activists argued, workers had little understanding of the nature of industrial employment and were too willing to just accept their situation:

> Workers' apathy towards their fate — whether it was created by capitalism or emerged by itself — is clearly a vicious circle. They know only house–factory–house–factory; they don't ever question their situation. The Javanese say *nrimo* [to acquiesce]. You know,

> 'fate'. So if they are not made conscious they will never rise up .... They just accept the way it is, that it's fitting that they be treated like they are because they believe, "We're labourers. We're ignorant, we have no education" (NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000).

Given their circumstances, activists argued, workers had little access to the material or conceptual tools required to improve their lot.

NGO activists frequently identified workers' fear of Communism and the government's responses to Communism as an equally important obstacle to motivating workers to organise. As one activist from a Christian NGO noted, "the government used the spectre of Communism and the PKI to put pressure on the people" (NGO Interview AQ, 23 February 2000). Although most people working in Indonesian factories in the 1990s had been born after 1965, they grew up on stories of its horrors and warnings of the dangers of Communism. As a member of another Jakarta-based Christian NGO observed:

> Workers now are the children of the 1965 generation. When they come to the city, their parents tell them, "When you work, just work, don't get involved in any organisations." Of course the children ask, "Why is that?" Their parents tell them, "The workers' organisation is called SOBSI and SOBSI is Communist. The Communists wanted to stage a coup and they all got killed." They tell them about SOBSI and warn them not to get involved (NGO Interview AU, 4 January 2000).[2]

Labour NGOs had to convince workers that it was both appropriate and beneficial for them to form labour groups and take part in strike actions because under the New Order, organisations had been "considered criminal ... unless an organisation was under the auspices of the government" (NGO Interview AG, 25 February 2000). Indeed as a worker-activist closely associated with a Catholic labour NGO complained, under the New Order "any people who gathered together were called Communists" (Worker Interview AC, 4 March 2000).

The equation of activism and Communism affected the ways in which workers initially perceived the efforts of labour NGOs. As a Christian grassroots labour NGO activist observed, "During the New Order, people thought we were anarchists!" (NGO Interview AQ, 23 February 2000). Another, from a labour NGO strongly committed to a liberal, human rights-based framework, complained:

> In Suharto's time we were called *pihak ketiga* (lit. 'third parties') and OTB (*Organisasi Tanpa Bentuk*, 'formless' organisations), and accused of being part of the PKI. We were called Communists! (NGO Interview AO, 31 January 2000).

The spectre of Communism not only inhibited worker activism but also affected how labour NGO activists themselves perceived their ability to contribute to the labour movement. Reflecting on the effects of the New Order's anti-Communist rhetoric, the same activist asserted that the task of NGOs was to "radicalise and educate workers, because militancy only comes with radicalisation". However, he continued:

> Sometimes it is dangerous if activists use terms like radicalisation because the people associate words like radical and militant with Communism. They don't understand — they get scared (NGO Interview AO, 31 January 2000).

At times, these concerns led to self-censorship or an unwillingness to push for greater change. This was not just a problem for labour NGOs. As Bourchier has noted:

> For many activists a more insidious barrier to effective political action and to democratic reform [than surveillance and low-level terror] has been the government's intensive, sustained propagation of an ideology which rejects the very idea of opposition (Bourchier, 1996: 2).

The political sensitivity of labour unrest, however, meant that workers' fear of participating in any form of oppositional movement was of particular concern to grassroots labour NGO activists. In this context of fear, activists sometimes struggled to develop an awareness amongst workers that they "were indeed workers, and that they had a fundamental right to establish trade unions" (NGO Interview BB, 29 March 1999).

A Driving Force

While emphasising that they did not wish to detract from the role of workers themselves in the upsurge of labour activism in the 1990s, NGO activists argued that it was "not likely" that workers could have organised themselves without support "from outside" (NGO Interview AQ, 23 February 2000). Several grassroots NGO activists stressed the

influence they had on the forms that labour activism assumed, arguing that NGOs had given a more structured form to workers' spontaneous reactions to exploitation (for example, NGO Interview AE, 21 February 2000).[3] As an activist from a Jakarta-based, policy-oriented NGO observed, reflecting on the contribution of grassroots labour NGOs:

> Workers would have gone on strike whether or not NGOs were involved with labour. Strikes were inevitable because there was a problem. The workers experienced oppression directly. But you can see the impact of NGOs in the quality of strikes. Some workers just go crazy. They want to destroy everything. Others are more orderly. That's where the NGOs came in. Workers organised strikes — and strikes are a form of organisation — but as soon as each strike was over, the organisation collapsed. NGOs helped workers to organise on a more permanent basis (NGO Interview AL, 8 March 2000).

In the words of an activist from a Bandung-based research and policy NGO, workers would have organised in any case, but "without the contribution of NGOs, there would not have been the progress there has been". The activist continued:

> No other organisation was going to go to the workers, and it would have been too hard for an individual to do. What was interesting was that it became a trend. Then, consciously or unconsciously, workers entrusted us with their fate.... Look at the Gadjah Tunggal case. NGOs were involved in all the big demonstrations. And many NGO activists were arrested. They took the same risks as the workers, in the sense that they too could be arrested and interrogated (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000).

In addition to providing encouragement to workers, social status and education gave labour NGOs access to resources that workers themselves did not have. Unlike the factory workers they championed, NGO activists had time, money and international support — as well as ideas about labour and labour organisations informed by their reading of history and their links with activists in other countries. They also understood labour law, the role of power in social structures and foreign models of labour relations. Grassroots labour NGO activists argued that their ability to provide physical resources, publicity and access was very important to the emerging labour movement. However, they felt that their key contribution was in providing access to knowledge

and the skills required for critical analysis. Activists claimed that their engagement at this level made a real difference to the way workers saw the world and lived their lives:

> Before the NGO-sponsored worker groups were established, workers would just work and go home. When NGOs started organising in the field, the workers who got to know them forgot about just going home. They wanted to talk, to read books. It was as if something had kick-started their desire to know things, to learn (NGO Interview BW, 7 July 2005).

Labour NGO activists had contacts in the media and sympathetic figures in the government, the bureaucracy and overseas, which meant they had the ability to make statements about labour and the means to ensure that those statements were heard. As the Bandung-based research and policy NGO activist reflected:

> NGOs' role in the labour movement during the Suharto era had a lot to do with the way the government responded to NGOs. When NGOs talked, the media listened and that put pressure on the government. I think it all began there. At that time, workers had no channel. The assumption was that if there was a union, it should be used, but at that time there was no organisation that voiced the concerns of workers. So there had to be intermediaries. And those intermediaries were NGOs. NGOs came to the workers and offered to raise their awareness. The workers trusted them because they felt that NGOs cared about them. They felt represented. Represented by the NGOs. Who else was there? ... The issues came from below but workers trusted NGOs to develop those issues and made them public.... The workers believed they were their friends — friends who had access to the wider public (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000).

As these reflections suggest, it was NGO activists' status as middle-class, non-worker intellectuals and the privileges that status brought which enabled them to take on worker issues and promote change.

Feet of Clay

Despite their overwhelmingly positive views of their contribution to the labour movement, NGO activists openly acknowledged the shortcomings of grassroots and policy labour NGOs, both individually and

collectively. They attributed these shortcomings to the characteristics of individuals and organisations and to the ambiguous position of NGOs in the labour movement. Besides the problem of communicating across the class divide, the issues they most often cited were the difficulty of working under a repressive government; individual and organisational egotism; pressures from donors; and the conflict between the interests of workers and NGOs' organisational need for continuity, along with the related concern of having to be seen as effective.

Activists' narratives and interpretations of relationships between labour NGOs perhaps said as much about their own backgrounds, convictions and reasons for becoming involved in labour activism as they did about any particular organisation.[4] Personality-based conflicts were common because the work of NGO activists was driven to a greater or lesser extent by their individual convictions and level of commitment. Several of the activists I interviewed had been associated with several NGOs over time. Some had previously been active in other labour NGOs, while some had been involved in organisations working in related areas such as human rights, legal aid or women's issues, or more disparate fields like the environment. When activists had left an NGO on good terms with their colleagues, cooperation between NGOs was enhanced by their move. Where they had left as a result of unresolved conflict, as was often the case, relations between their old and new place of employment — or between the NGO they had worked for and the NGO they subsequently established — was almost inevitably compromised.

Institutional rivalry was also strong. NGO activists were quick to acknowledge that labour NGOs did not always work together to achieve the best outcomes for workers. One long-term Jakarta-based labour NGO activist observed that it had been much easier to co-operate before the explosion in NGO numbers during the 1990s. Since then, the activist commented, "each institution seems to have its own priorities" (NGO Interview AM, 12 March 1999). An activist from Surabaya made a similar point:

> Each NGO has its own hidden agenda — that's the NGO disease. This makes it very difficult for NGOs to form strategic alliances. Some NGOs want to be better than the rest, to force their ideas on everyone else and to gain prominence for their own organisation. They don't take working together seriously (NGO Interview AZ, 24 March 1999).

Friction between NGOs led to poor coordination within the movement as a whole. One activist observed that "there is not enough communication between labour NGOs because each NGO believes it is right" (NGO Interview AS, 19 March 1999). For another, the problem was that "in NGOs, egotism (*akuisme*) is very high" (NGO Interview AU, 4 January 2000). And as an activist from a Christian grassroots labour NGO commented:

> Different labour NGOs have different paradigms. There's nothing wrong with having different opinions in a democracy. The problem doesn't arise out of not cooperating — it arises when NGOs start denouncing each other. Then they get exclusive because they think that they are right (NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000).

A fourth activist expressed his discontent with the lack of cooperation far more strongly, describing the relationship between some labour NGOs as being one of "mutual disparagement" (NGO Interview AZ, 24 March 1999). This tendency, which was stronger in some parts of the labour NGO community than in others, manifested itself in the way activists described other NGOs.

The frequency of conflict in and between labour NGOs was caused partly by the conditions in which they operated. The decisions NGOs made about strategy had very real implications for the personal safety and well-being of workers and NGO activists. Activists told of being shadowed by members of the National Intelligence Agency (Badan Intelijen Negara, BIN), visited in their homes and threatened, even taken into custody by police overnight. Workers who participated in strikes or demonstrations risked imprisonment and physical harm and faced the possibility of losing their jobs. In light of these stakes, it is not surprising that proponents of different levels of confrontation with the state often disagreed about the approach that should be taken to assist workers. These disagreements sometimes fuelled resentment, prompting criticisms like that made by the Surabaya activist cited earlier, who used the English term "hit and run" to describe NGOs that "raised issues but didn't take any responsibility for what comes out of their campaigns" (NGO Interview AZ, 24 March 1999).

Relationships between NGOs were also complicated by foreign intervention. Although pressure from international NGOs and human rights groups helped overcome the limits on civil society by creating space for NGOs, those links also affected perceptions of local NGOs' motivations for engagement and their ability to maximise outcomes

for workers. Questions of funding and the possibility of excessive donor influence concerned every NGO activist. Many activists explicitly recognised the link between the difficulties faced by their organisations and pressure to appear more successful than other labour NGOs in the eyes of their donor:

> The NGOs involved in labour have yet to develop a common platform. There's a history to this. When opportunities arise, it seems wonderful but after the honeymoon has passed, we fall back into the *abyss* [English in the original]. Cooperative efforts always fail because instead of acknowledging our strengths and weaknesses, we all want to emphasise our own capabilities more than we want to cooperate (NGO Interview AE, 21 February 2000).

NGO activists also identified international pressures with regard to funding, performance and accountability, which they saw as barriers to cooperation amongst labour NGOs:

> All labour NGOs claim to care about workers. And they are all conscious that workers' problems must be faced together, that they can't be dealt with individually. But to be honest, we are under pressure to make sure our individual organisations stand out. So we cooperate on big issues, but when they're finished, we go back to working on our own (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000).

According to activists, the level at which an individual NGO was influenced by donor priorities depended considerably on whether they were funded by block grant or by project. However, the evolving focus of labour NGOs demonstrated that even organisations enjoying steady base funding were influenced by international trends.

One strong indication of donor influence among labour NGOs was the number of organisations that had gender programs, even though gender was clearly not a priority for most labour NGO activists. In interviews, two activists spontaneously raised the issue of gender when asked directly if their donor's funding agenda influenced their programs. The first, the head of a legal aid bureau, observed that his organisation had no plans to establish a gender program until donors encouraged them to do so (NGO Interview AJ, 23 March 1999). The second, an activist from a Catholic NGO who had earlier challenged the public perception that labour NGOs' priorities were always dictated by funding, commented:

> What donor gives anything if it's not in their interests? But that doesn't mean that NGOs can be totally controlled. In my experience, NGOs have an opportunity to determine what they do. Like the gender issue. Gender is a sexy issue, but we don't deal with gender. We decided we don't want to have a special program for women (NGO Interview AE, 21 February 2000).

These perceptions of excessive donor influence were perhaps the strongest threat to the legitimacy of Indonesia's labour NGOs. Sometimes actions taken in response to pressures to take on donor-promoted programs, to compete for donors' funds or to prove to donors that one NGO was more effective than another resulted in accusations that workers were *dijual* (sold), *dipelihara* (kept) or *dikapling-kaplingkan* (subdivided) for organisational gain. Labour NGOs' efforts to preserve their own institutions made them an easy target for such criticism and weakened their moral position.

Labour NGOs' need to produce outcomes for their funders also created a relationship of dependence between the NGOs themselves and the worker groups they sponsored, even where NGOs were fully committed to the advancement of workers' interests:

> There were some NGOs that didn't want to empower the workers because they considered the workers to be subordinate. They used the workers to ensure that the NGO became well-known and could get funding. But many others really did want workers to be able to improve their situation and to stand on their own feet. The idea was that if workers really progressed, NGOs could step back and find something else to do. But the trouble with these kinds of dependent relationships is that sometimes workers didn't believe in themselves, and NGOs felt that workers couldn't manage without them (NGO Interview BW, 7 July 2005).

Reflecting on his own experience, an activist from a Christian labour NGO observed that he had become increasingly aware of "the risk that the relationship between an NGO and its workers could become like the relationship between a father and a child". This choice of words clearly demonstrated that he believed that a patron-client relationship existed between NGOs and NGO-sponsored worker groups (NGO Interview BL, 7 March 2000). Most grassroots NGOs were involved in similarly hierarchical relationships with the worker groups they sponsored. This dependent relationship added force to the New Order's assertions that labour NGOs were no different from the political parties

which manipulated trade unions in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and that NGO activists were outsiders who had no right to interfere in the labour movement.

Worker-Activist Views

The small number of labour NGOs and the oppressive situation in which they worked meant that labour NGO activists reached only a tiny proportion of workers and influenced even fewer. However, the comments of worker-activists who had been exposed to the programs of labour NGOs suggest that grassroots labour NGOs had an enormous impact on the workers and worker-activists with whom they dealt.[5] When assessing the contribution of NGOs to the labour movement in the late New Order, worker-activists concentrated on the organisations with which they were associated or on other grassroots labour NGOs. Unlike labour NGO activists, almost all of whom claimed NGOs' policy advocacy function made an important contribution to the reconstruction of the labour movement, few worker-activists commented at length on the role of policy and research NGOs.

Divided interests and the tendency of grassroots NGOs to take a dominant position in their relationship with worker groups were the main concerns of the worker-activists most closely associated with those NGOs. Labour NGO activists recognised that these issues were problematic but perhaps also inevitable, given the need for institutional continuity and the innate differences between themselves and the workers they assisted. By contrast, worker-activists understood them as a sign of NGOs' failure to commit themselves fully to the labour movement, rather than as the products of an inherent division between workers and labour intellectuals. As suggested below, this rejection of the New Order's reading of the labour movement was at least in part a result of worker-activists' lack of exposure to the labour movement theories associated with the Revisionism so wholeheartedly embraced by most labour NGO activists.

A Beacon in the Dark

Like labour NGO activists, most worker-activists agreed that labour NGOs had played a vital role in the reconstruction of the Indonesian labour movement in the 1990s. As one worker-activist who now runs a trade union explained:

> NGOs were really dominant at that time, and they really helped. They had access everywhere. They had so much more access to information and so on than workers (Worker Interview AD, 30 June 2001).

When describing NGOs' contribution to the labour movement, worker-activists pointed to their capacity to assist in a wide range of ways. Many noted various types of practical assistance, such as the provision of physical facilities, opportunities to meet other workers, money to run meetings and technical training on how to run an organisation or to organise effective strikes. At a deeper level, however, workers and worker-activists agreed that labour NGOs offered workers education and understanding. The importance of education was strongly emphasised by a worker who had just attended an NGO-sponsored training workshop for the first time. When asked why he had signed up for the course he replied, "If we want to organise, we must have knowledge." For him, an ideal NGO was one that:

> ... helps workers because they know a lot about law and stuff and we always get stuck when we want to do something. We're blind; we don't know which way to go. But like [the NGO activists] said yesterday, we're not allowed to wait for instructions. They're only motivators. It's funny, isn't it? We all still want to be motivated, even though we should be able to motivate ourselves (Worker Interview AM, 13 February 2000).

Recognising the contribution labour NGOs had made to both his own development as an activist and his ability to organise others, an experienced worker-activist observed that the most important aspect of labour NGOs' involvement in the labour movement was "the ideas and the motivation they provided ... they provoked us to think".[6] He continued to say, echoing the opinions of many like him, that as a result of NGO engagement, "those who didn't know came to know, those who were not conscious became conscious (*yang nggak tahu jadi tahu, yang nggak sadar jadi sadar*)" (Worker Interview AD, 30 June 2001). In the minds of many worker-activists, this consciousness-raising — the key function of a classical labour intellectual — was the most important function of grassroots labour NGOs.

The ability of NGO activists to teach workers to think differently changed those workers' perceptions and practices and equipped them for the difficult work of organising. Reflecting on their own experience,

worker-activists observed that consciousness-raising was a difficult task. Class consciousness was "not something that grows by itself but something which workers must be made to understand" (Worker Interview AB, 14 February 2000). In the words of a 'worker guerrilla' who had worked with a labour NGO while remaining part of the government-sanctioned Federation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, FSPSI):

> The hardest thing ... is making the workers conscious. You can't just do it once. You have to do it twice, three times, even four times. There are lots of methods that can be used to raise workers' consciousness. But they all take time, and you have to move slowly. You have to start from their experience — from real cases. The best time to move is when something has happened in the factory. For example, if a worker is unfairly dismissed. Or say a female worker is pregnant and the company won't give her maternity leave. Her case can be used to help make other workers conscious. It's a very long process because you are working with people who don't know anything at all about organising. I know from my experience that even when workers learn about their rights — about law, about this, that, and the other — even after they've taken part in a strike, they're sometimes still confused. They don't really know what they've been doing. When that happens, you have to start again from the beginning. You have to educate them, so that they become conscious, then you have to organise them all over again (Worker Interview AS, 24 January 2000).

Worker-activists who had a long association with labour NGOs or student groups clearly differentiated between themselves and their non-activist counterparts who were "not yet conscious". In the words of one such worker-activist, "Many of our friends would rather sleep and eat than attend a meeting" (Worker Interview AC, 4 March 2000). This view was confirmed by a group of young female factory workers in a large export-oriented footwear factory. They had no interest in talking about inequities in the workplace, describing instead the consumer goods they were saving for, how they managed their money to achieve their saving goals and their plans for marriage (Interview with non-activist workers at PT Pou Chen, 24 January 2000). Another group of workers living in the dormitory attached to a textile factory discussed similar matters. They had been approached by worker-activists but had no interest in becoming involved in labour activism. They felt that involvement in the independent labour movement would take up all

of their leisure time and offer little in return, except danger. As workers who had chosen not to attend NGO-sponsored activities explained, "We've been asked along to their activities but it's too risky" (Interview with non-activist workers at PT Spindomill, 27 January 2000).

Once workers had achieved class consciousness, their attitudes changed. As a worker-activist associated with a leftist worker group noted, "Once workers are conscious, they are happy to give up their time for meetings and discussions. They're even prepared to give up their overtime" (Worker Interview AL, 20 March 1999). It was this new level of consciousness that empowered workers to shift beyond spontaneous action, driven by anger and desperation, to more structured forms of resistance. These were the structures that laid the foundations for the reconstruction of the Indonesian labour movement.

Barriers to Greater Engagement

Although worker-activists acknowledged and welcomed NGOs' engagement with labour issues, they were not blind to the limits of their contribution. Their criticisms, however, were a form of critical engagement rather than a rejection of NGO involvement. Unsurprisingly, some of the strongest criticisms of labour NGOs came from worker-activists who spent a large proportion of their time in the company of labour NGO activists. Indeed, the more engaged were worker-activists with labour NGOs, the more aware they became of their shortcomings. Worker-activists' assessments of NGO practice often revolved around questions of commitment at the day-to-day level. As one member of an NGO-sponsored union remarked dryly, the NGO activists with whom he spent time:

> ... have too many demands on them, and they make promises too easily. For example, they might promise to be somewhere at 9:00 am, but they might not get there until 3:00 pm, or even 7:00 pm (Worker Interview AH, 13 February 2000).

My own experiences attending meetings and training sessions held in worker communities by a range of NGOs suggests that it was not uncommon for workers to spend a considerable part of their day off or their evening waiting for NGO activists to arrive.

More substantive criticisms focused on differences between the interests of workers and those of NGOs, together with NGOs' lack of understanding of workers' experiences and priorities. Reflecting on

the different perspectives of NGO activists and workers, the 'worker guerrilla' who remained in FSPSI noted that "NGO activists don't know what it means to be workers — the fear that workers have" (Worker Interview AS, 24 January 2000). In the words of another worker-activist:

> NGOs have lots of theories about how to build up the labour movement. They know a lot about theory because they've all been to university. But that theory can't always be put into practice. What works in the Philippines or in Korea doesn't necessarily work in Indonesia. They want to help, but they're groping around in the dark (Worker Interview AP, 29 February 2000).

Like more conservative NGO activists, worker-activists were cognisant of the risks posed by over-zealous NGO campaigns that placed workers at a much greater risk than that faced by the NGO itself. According to a trade union official closely associated with one grassroots labour NGO, worker-activists believed that:

> Many NGOs just create rumours — to be blunt, they become involved in provocation. They raise workers' consciousness and then tell them to strike (Worker Interview AF, 27 January 2001).

Many of these kinds of criticisms concerned the inability of NGO activists to understand the material conditions of workers. The worker-activists who commented on this problem reflected on the class-based structure of Indonesian society generally, as well as on the behaviour of particular NGO activists. For example, one worker-activist who argued that middle-class outsiders were a necessary part of the labour movement also gave a long list of examples to illustrate the gap between workers and NGO activists. He was particularly critical of the big hotels in which NGOs often held meetings, their formality and their "flash words" (Worker Interview AS, 24 January 2000). Speaking with a tinge of bitterness, another observed that "NGO activists need a car, and a tie ... that just makes the distance between them and the workers bigger and bigger. We don't want to be like that." This second worker-activist, who was associated with a Christian NGO, went on to provide a catalogue of the types of NGOs who used workers for their own interests:

> Some make a hobby out of selling workers ... there are plenty of those. There are also those who *minteri* workers. Do you understand

> *minteri*? It's Javanese. It means they don't make workers clever, they just make a big deal out of how much cleverer they are. They use workers. They don't want to listen because they think they know better. Then there are the ones who find out that workers are having a strike and bring their typewriter so they can ask for power of attorney. They type it all up on the spot, and then they put themselves forward. There are lots of those, too! Then there are the ones that make membership cards and tell the workers to pay dues but when something happens, when they're supposed to step in, they don't. It's so easy to find examples. Take the legal aid NGOs. They employ lawyers. But let's face it, who do lawyers usually defend? Lawyers don't defend workers. Lawyers defend bosses. So the ones that work in legal aid just do it to get some experience. What sort of commitment is that? (Worker Interview AJ, 5 June 2001).

Voicing a common, related complaint about the failure of labour NGOs to work together to promote the interests of labour and their tendency to serve their own interests rather than the interests of workers, he went on to complain that:

> When NGOs talk about the labour movement, they can never agree. They can never unite to develop a common vision. Their priorities are all different. They just keep on working on their own, developing puppet organisations. They don't focus on developing cadres of worker-organisers who can operate independently, they develop NGO cadres (Worker Interview AJ, 5 June 2001).

Elaborating on his theme, this worker-activist said that some NGOs even claimed credit for workers' own organising efforts. When asked for a concrete example of this process, he described an incident from his personal experience. After attempting to form a worker group in his workplace, he had become involved with an NGO. In cooperation with that NGO, he and his fellow workers created a sizeable network of worker groups in a number of factories, only to have another NGO claim credit for establishing the entire network. The activist's rage was palpable, as he proclaimed through clenched teeth, "It was in all the national newspapers. It was headline news! But they didn't do anything in the field!" (Worker Interview AJ, 5 June 2001). These experiences had led him to conclude that "labour NGOs are like pop song writers". When pressed to elaborate, he continued:

> Well, they make a big fuss about something — something that will make news — but there's nothing to back it up. At first they are really, really enthusiastic, but then it just turns into a polemic. After that, there's nothing. Then it starts all over again. It's always like that. What I mean is that for organisations that say they want to build up the strength of the workers, they tend to be not very consistent.... To put it even more negatively, workers become a sort of political commodity (Worker Interview AJ, 5 June 2001).

It is significant that worker-activists like him nevertheless maintained their relationship with a labour NGO. Indeed, as Vedi Hadiz asserts, "even the most anti-NGO workers actually do still say that they want to maintain contact with labour NGOs" (Interview, 15 March 2000). This is reflected in the fact that while some of the worker-activists I interviewed criticised the organisations with which they were associated, more often worker-activists were far more positive about 'their' NGO than about labour NGOs on the whole.

Worker-activists, like NGO activists, often blamed many NGO shortcomings on their dependence on donor funding. According to a Bandung-based worker-activist, the need to secure funding had a very direct effect on grassroots labour NGOs' approach to workers:

> Because of the donors, they sort of ask workers to make an unwritten commitment to them. I mean, if a particular group of workers has been guided by one NGO, well ... it's hard for them to ask for help from another NGO. And if they do, they can be punished in some way or even ostracised completely. That was the worst thing (Worker Interview AQ, 29 February 2000).

This worker-activist also raised a related point about the divisions between NGOs, which he saw as limiting workers' ability to participate in labour forums and to form networks:

> Because NGOs have their own interests, it's really hard to unite workers. The workers are all in separate boxes because of NGO interests. For example, if there's a discussion, it ends up that the NGOs get represented, not the workers. Even if workers want to run their own discussion they have to ask permission from their NGOs! This is real. It's a big obstacle (Worker Interview AQ, 29 February 2000).

Worker-activists also expressed concerns about NGOs' role as gatekeepers, preventing worker groups from accessing international support

directly. This was seen as perpetuating uneven power relations and preventing workers from taking control of their own destiny.

The dependence of NGO-sponsored worker groups on the labour NGOs that supported them posed practical problems for worker-activists as they struggled to weigh up the advantages of continuing their association with an NGO against the disadvantages they felt they suffered in that relationship. It also betrayed a fault line in the structural relationship between workers and labour NGOs. While worker-activists criticised NGOs for being too controlling, they were even more concerned about the point at which labour NGOs stepped back and left workers to manage their own campaigns. According to one worker-activist, labour NGOs were "busy with their own programs. They just arrive, stir up a demo then disappear" (Worker Interview AK, 19 February 2000). Athreya cites a similar case where one worker who chose to associate with an alternative union rather than a labour NGO because:

> NGOs ... teach you how to do everything but then they leave you to do it on your own. They're not there to help you when you actually are brave enough to take action, and they can't keep you from being fired (Athreya, 1998: 115).

While labour NGO activists often stated their intention to withdraw during preparation for strike action, worker-activists did not understand their reasons for doing so. As one worker noted, reflecting on his own expectations of a labour NGO:

> People learn from NGOs — they develop skills. They form groups and at some stage they organise a demonstration. It turns out that those workers cop it. Even if the demands are met, the vocal ones get sacked. I think that NGOs shouldn't just 'tickle' (*menggelitik*) us. It doesn't take any special skills to get up and say, "Oppose, oppose, oppose. Smash them!" But it's the people doing the smashing who get arrested, not the NGOs. NGOs should be more responsible. NGOs need to think more — they can't just give us knowledge, they have to be there for us. It's like a karate teacher who teaches kids karate. The kids take other kids on, but if they can't manage, the teacher steps in. Or if you have kids, you teach them that they have to do this and this and this, but if there's a problem, as parents you have to get involved. That's how an NGO should be (Worker Interview AN, 14 February 2000).

Criticisms such as these squarely targeted the Revisionist understanding of the labour movement adopted by labour NGOs. Whereas labour NGO activists believed their proper place lay outside the organised labour movement, workers and worker-activists saw this as problematic. In other words, although worker-activists recognised the class differences between themselves and labour NGO activists, they did not always accept the Revisionist demarcation between trade unions and non-worker intellectuals. Labour NGO activists argued that their role should be temporary and limited because 'true' labour organisations were independent organisations by, of and for workers. Worker-activists, however, did not accept this premise, arguing that distinctions between trade unions and labour NGOs were artificial and that NGOs' failure to commit fully to the labour movement was an abrogation of their responsibilities rather than a recognition of their proper role.

Pressures for Change

Towards the end of the New Order, NGO commitment to the labour movement was challenged by the growing number of worker-activists who became less tolerant of inconsistencies between their own and NGO activists' interpretations of the role labour NGOs should play. This trend developed from the mid-1990s as worker-activists grew more confident through their contact with grassroots labour NGOs. As one NGO activist recalled, reflecting on the evolution of NGO–worker relationships, "At first workers were just pleased someone wanted to help, but over time they became increasingly critical" (NGO Interview BQ, 11 March 1999).

The growing intensity of worker-activists' critiques of labour NGOs can be read as a sign of the success of attempts by grassroots NGOs to educate workers and workers' subsequent experiences of organising. As a Surabaya-based labour NGO activist observed:

> At first it's really difficult to get workers to treat you as an equal. They always talk about what little education they have. But eventually they become aware of their abilities, particularly when they have a victory in the workplace or whatever. Then they become proud of being a worker, their self-esteem grows. That's where it starts. Then slowly they are awakened, and they begin to feel like they are our equals. And then eventually they see our stupidity, as for example when we don't understand something that they understand. That's when they start to feel that workers and graduates are no different. It's just about the opportunities that

> we've had. Eventually, through this process, the inequalities in the NGO-worker relationship level themselves out (NGO Interview BW, 7 July 2005).

As this activist suggests, when workers' grasp of the theory and practice of organising grew, the gaps between them and their mentor NGO activists narrowed.

The effects of NGOs' consciousness-raising efforts were particularly apparent in workshops I attended in 1999 in which newly recruited workers participated alongside 'graduates' from previous courses. There was a clear difference between the problems new and experienced participants identified in their workplaces and their understanding of the causes of those problems. This difference was reflected, for example, in illustrations produced in one consciousness-raising exercise. Novices produced simple drawings of their journey from their village to the city, showing themselves working in the fields and then in a factory. The 'graduates' from previous courses produced far more complex storyboards, which included illustrations representing conflict in factories and the inequalities between factory owners and workers. The extent to which worker-activists absorbed the language and concepts of their middle-class mentors was even more apparent in meetings involving long-term worker-activists. At some gatherings, it was very clear which participants were workers. In many others, however, it was difficult to tell the difference between worker-activists and their NGO activist counterparts. Worker-activists' commitment to organising was also clearly evident in these forums: some groups gave up tens of hours each month to their activism and took risks in their workplaces to encourage others to become involved in community-based worker groups.

Many of the worker-activists I interviewed had been sacked at least once for their involvement in workplace organising. Some had gained employment in different factories in the same city, while others had been forced to move to another province because they had been blacklisted by factory owners. Others, whom radical student groups accused of having *naik kelas* (entered the middle class), had become full-time activists after failing to find other employment. The status of these worker-activists who no longer worked in a factory was also a contentious matter within labour NGO circles. Members of Bhakti Pertiwi and the Bandung Workers' Group, the two labour NGOs established by worker-activists who had themselves been organised by the Jakarta and Bandung Legal Aid Institutes (LBH Jakarta and LBH

Bandung), were ambivalent about claiming NGO status, even though they were structured as NGOs and Bhakti Pertiwi received substantial annual grants from abroad for a number of years. These organisations were groups of workers who wanted to form a trade union but ultimately chose to adopt an NGO structure in order to circumvent the New Order's restrictions on mass organisations. The activists who established them saw themselves as workers, not middle-class NGO activists.

While Bhakti Pertiwi and the Bandung Workers' Group were exceptional cases, many other worker-activists did *naik kelas*. The status of these other former workers who became activists was even more ambiguous than their colleagues in ex-worker-led NGOs. On the one hand, they were no longer 'of the workers', yet, on the other hand, they generally held 'volunteer' rather than 'staff' status at the NGO where they worked. The increasingly critical stance taken by these 'organic intellectuals' towards NGOs' classical mode of labour intellectualism both signalled the success of NGOs' efforts and represented the genesis of a challenge to their dominant position. However, it did not herald their demise. As an organiser in a trade union that had its origins in an NGO-sponsored worker group observed:

> Worker-activists were really conscious that the labour movement needs more than just workers. It needs other people — middle-class people — who care about labour issues. We can't stand alone (Worker Interview AB, 14 February 2000).

The emergence of such worker-activists, who took on organising and educational work in collaboration with or independent of their NGO mentors, marked an important transition in the character of the labour movement. The contribution labour NGOs made as classical intellectuals continued to be acknowledged by worker-activists, but that acknowledgment was accompanied by growing doubts about the depth of NGOs' commitment to labour. These doubts did not arise because worker-activists rejected the involvement of NGOs in labour issues. They arose because worker-activists expected NGOs to be fully committed to the movement and condemned them when they failed to meet this expectation. In short, worker-activists did not criticise labour NGO activists for being non-worker intellectuals; they criticised them for not immersing themselves sufficiently in workers' struggles. This rejection of labour NGOs' insistence that labour organisations must be completely *of* the working class indicates that worker-activists were far less committed than labour NGO activists to trade union-centred models of the movement.

7

Organised Labour after Suharto

The New Order came to an end after Indonesia's currency collapsed in the wake of the Asian financial crisis.[1] The devaluation of the rupiah in the second half of 1997 sparked a 'total crisis', leading to the resignation of President Suharto in May 1998 and the subsequent disintegration of New Order state corporatism.[2] In what became known as the era of Reformasi, the authoritarian social structures that characterised the New Order were gradually dismantled, the influence of the military significantly reduced and the government-controlled three-party system replaced by an open, multi-party democracy which, although dominated by existing parties, offered opportunities for new political forces to emerge.[3]

At the very time that labour's economic position was being undermined by the economic crisis, the democratisation of Indonesia's political climate presented new opportunities to labour activists, allowing workers to organise openly and providing space for trade unions to take a stronger role in the workplace and in national industrial relations forums. Under the new regime, there was a shift in the locus of the system away from the state to bilateral negotiations between trade unions and employers (Ford, 2004a). The balance of power between the regions and the centre also changed significantly after a policy of regional autonomy took effect from the beginning of 2001, shifting responsibility for a whole range of government functions — including industrial relations — to the local level (Aspinall and Fealy, 2003).[4] These economic and political developments had a profound effect on the labour movement.

The responses of workers and activists to the newly found freedom to organise transformed Indonesia's industrial relations landscape in the decade that followed Suharto's resignation. The changes in trade

unions' conduct of their industrial functions represented a dramatic shift from the practice of industrial relations under the New Order. However, the renewed political ambitions of trade unions presented a deep challenge not only to the government's ongoing commitment to apolitical unionism: in addition to undermining the socio-economic definition of trade unions that had dominated labour thinking for almost four decades, the return of political unionism also made room for new thinking about Indonesia's labour NGOs. For if trade unions could form alliances with political parties, there was no longer any logical reason why labour NGOs should forever be outsiders with no real place in the Indonesian labour movement.

The Changing Landscape of Labour Relations

Changes in the political climate after the fall of Suharto dramatically affected the context in which workers sought to organise, both directly through changes in the management of industrial relations and indirectly through the opening up of the political system. Indonesia's industrial relations system was restructured, creating new opportunities for the representation of labour that gave existing trade unions room to reinvigorate themselves and allowed independent trade unions, previously confined to the margins of the labour movement, to register and participate more fully in industrial relations processes. Grassroots organising also became much easier as the close surveillance of labour characteristic of the Suharto period was relaxed and systematic repression of the labour movement decreased (Ford, 2001).

Labour was poorly positioned, however, to take advantage of this new political space (Aspinall, 1999; Ford, 2005). Although the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s had little effect on overall labour force participation rates, the collapse of the exchange rate and investor uncertainty over the country's unsettled political and economic situation severely affected Indonesia's small formal sector. Rising unemployment amongst workers with industrial experience posed an enormous challenge to the labour movement in the early years of Reformasi. Before the crisis, secondary industry had experienced strong growth for nearly two decades (Hill, 1999). In 1997–98 alone, manufacturing sector employment contracted by over 11 per cent and over a million manufacturing jobs were lost (Manning, 2000: 122–4). Many of the workers who lost their formal sector jobs retreated to the agricultural sector while the percentage of people employed in the informal sector

rose from around 41 per cent in 1995 to approximately 46 per cent in 1998–99 (Feridhanusetyawan, 2000). Real wages dropped by 38 per cent, leaving those who remained in the formal sector much worse off at the height of the economic crisis than they had been in early 1997 (Manning, 2000: 129), and it was not until 2000 that minimum wages began to approach pre-crisis levels (SMERU, 2001: 11–16). In this climate, many workers were reluctant to engage in trade union activity for fear that they would be sacked if they caused too much trouble in the workplace.

The Indonesian economy slowly recovered in the decade before the global financial crisis of 2008 but much of the manufacturing growth in that decade was "jobless growth" as Indonesian manufacturers remained under heavy pressure from other low-wage economies, most notably China, which offered better physical security and lower levels of corruption (see Akatiga-TURC-LabSosio UI, 2006). Capital flight and restructuring in labour-intensive manufacturing, where union density was highest, meant that many of Indonesia's new trade unions lost membership when heavily unionised factories closed or restructured.[5] At the same time, a trend towards outsourcing and casualisation of factory workforces undermined the ability of trade unions to recruit new members in those industries. Yet while the crisis made workers less willing to risk their jobs to join trade unions, the end of the one-union policy meant that trade unionists and other labour activists now had much more freedom to campaign and organise than they had had under the New Order. As a result, Indonesia's trade union movement expanded rapidly and soon began to assert itself both industrially and politically.

Initial Developments in the Habibie Interregnum

The legislative and policy changes affecting the regulation of labour after the collapse of the New Order began with a series of dramatic policy reversals when Vice-President Habibie assumed the presidency immediately after Suharto's resignation. Despite the scandals that dogged his government, Habibie presided over what Bourchier has called "a remarkable, almost Gorbachev-esque, period of political reform" (Bourchier, 2000). Within industrial relations, the changes wrought by Habibie, a Westernised engineer who had spent many years as an executive with the Messerschmit Corporation in West Germany, were deep and far-reaching. While the interim government retained many of

the formal structures and much of the rhetoric of Pancasila Industrial Relations, it abandoned the New Order's commitment to a *de facto* single vehicle of labour representation and committed Indonesia to a new style of labour relations, thereby setting the agenda for the decade to come.

Two legislative initiatives shaped the form and substance of industrial relations during Habibie's presidency. The first of these was the implementation of International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, which Habibie ratified through Presidential Decision No. 83/1998, less than three weeks after assuming the presidency. The ratification of ILO Convention No. 87 signalled the new government's readiness to abandon the New Order's one-union policy and with it an important element of state corporatism. While still constraining workers' freedom of association, the terms of its implementation as defined in Ministerial Regulation PER-05/MEN/1998 considerably lowered registration requirements for trade unions, trade union federations and confederations. But while appearing to allow the formation of different types of trade unions, the subsequent regulation contained its own restrictions. For example, the decision declared that worker organisations could be sectorally based or take "other forms that meet the needs of workers" but maintained restrictions on cross-sectoral organisations by limiting the permissible range of trade union structures to enterprise unions, sector-based union associations and trade union federations and confederations. Trade unions thus could not be regionally based.

Under Ministerial Regulation PER-05/MEN/1998, trade unions were also still required to have Pancasila as their sole organising principle. For example, when a worker group associated with the leftist National Front for Indonesian Workers' Struggle (Front Nasional Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia, FNPBI) attempted to register, leaders were advised by Ministry officials that they were not permitted to include in their constitution or by-laws objectives such as international labour solidarity, promoting democratisation or striving for world peace. According to the bureaucrats, these were political objectives outside the ambit of a trade union, which should be concerned only with social and economic matters (ACILS, 1999c: 18). The requirement that trade unions adopt Pancasila as their founding principle was later abolished. A prohibition against the involvement of management, government and political parties in trade union affairs was also

introduced under Ministerial Decision No. 201/1999 on Worker Organisations, passed on 30 September, just before the end of the Habibie interregnum (ACILS, 1999c: 18). This Ministerial Decision also further relaxed restrictions imposed on trade union structures.

The second main legislative development of the Habibie interregnum was the transitional government's decision to proceed with the implementation of Manpower Law No. 25/1997. This law, which the New Order government had described as a comprehensive attempt to update Indonesia's labour legislation, was designed to replace six ordinances and eight other laws. There was little in the 1997 Manpower Law that contradicted the regulations passed in 1998. It guaranteed the right of workers to form trade unions provided that they were based on the Pancasila ideology and formed at the company level from, by and for workers, excluding employees in management positions or those who performed duties that would create a conflict of interest with trade union membership. The plant-level unions permitted under the law could become members of sectoral unions, which in turn could affiliate with a peak trade union body, much as was the case under Ministerial Decision No. 201/1999. Under the 1997 law, trade unions had the right to negotiate collective labour agreements and to act as a party in industrial disputes. It also recognised the right to strike on the condition that workers and trade unions inform the company and relevant government departments seven days in advance and entitled workers striking over 'normative' issues — the non-enforcement of conditions mandated under laws and regulations — to claim wages while on strike.

Yet while to some extent freeing up trade unions, Law No. 25/1997 entrenched the full range of corporatist institutions of the New Order period, including the system's bipartite and tripartite cooperative consultative bodies. It also allowed for company rules (established after consultation with workers' representatives) as well as collective agreements (negotiated between the company and a registered trade union representing a majority of workers in that company). The transitional government's firm re-endorsement of the structures of New Order industrial relations drew strong and sustained public criticism, much of it from labour NGOs (Amiruddin and Masduki, 1997). In the face of campaigns to discard it altogether, a Habibie government-appointed working group convened to evaluate the law decided against striking it from the statutes. In fact, the only change made as a result of the working group's deliberations was to postpone by two years the

date the law became effective, from 1 October 1998 to 1 October 2000. Although the law was finally revoked (*divakuum*) on 27 September 2002, the repeated efforts of successive governments to implement it had sent a message to NGOs, trade unions and worker activists that the ideology of Pancasila Industrial Relations and the centrally focused corporatist industrial relations system were still very much in force.

Manpower Law No. 25/1997 aside, the labour reforms initiated by Habibie were remarkably progressive in light of Indonesia's difficult economic and political situation. Perhaps even more importantly, they were accompanied by reductions in direct military and bureaucratic intervention in industrial relations. Some press reports and fieldwork interviews conducted in early 1999 indicated that workers were still being subjected to intimidation. For example, in February 1999 five workers were fired upon in a demonstration at Sinar Indo Megantara, an export-oriented furniture company in East Java, while eight workers from a plywood factory were hospitalised with wounds from rubber bullets on 5 March of the same year. On another occasion, a labour activist reported that intelligence officers arrived at a religious social gathering (*Halal bi Halal*) that he and his colleagues had organised for about 5,000 people even though the police had been notified of their plans. In other cases, military personnel were simply replaced by thugs (*preman*) in an attempt to deflect accusations of military intervention in industrial disputes (Ford, 2001). However, activists reported that there was much less military intervention in the activities of trade unions, grassroots worker groups and labour NGOs and the workplace than before Suharto fell.

The Labour Law Reform Package and Its Impact

The legislative initiatives of the Habibie period marked the beginning of a substantial shift in the legal framework of Indonesia's industrial relations system. In the period from 1999 to 2004 — a period over which Indonesia had four different presidents and six different Ministers for Manpower — four more ILO conventions were ratified and the government began working with the ILO on the drafting of three labour laws.[6] This Labour Law Reform Package, which Habibie had hoped to have in place by the end of 1999, consisted of the Law on Trade Unions, the Manpower Law and the Law on Industrial Disputes Settlement.[7] Though in many ways flawed, the reforms brought with them a relaxation of the New Order's centrally focused corporatist framework and a more active role for organised labour.

The key element of the package was Manpower Law No. 13/2003, introduced to replace the unpopular 1997 law. The new law was drafted through bipartite negotiations conducted under the auspices of a parliamentary standing committee (Komisi VII) in late 2002 and early 2003. Like the law it replaced, Law No. 13/2003 covered a wide range of issues, including industrial relations but also labour force planning, vocational training, the regulation of foreigners working in Indonesia and wage-setting. With regard to industrial relations, the law maintained the government's commitment to Pancasila Industrial Relations and the 'from, by and for workers' model of trade unionism favoured under the New Order. It also preserved the requirement for bipartite and tripartite cooperative bodies and provided for the use of both company rules and collective labour agreements. While this new law maintained many of the features of the industrial relations system specified in Law No. 25/1997, it paved the way for dramatic changes to that system, particularly with regard to trade unionism and disputes resolution.

One of the most important functions of Law No. 13/2003 was to provide a retrospective framework for the changes made to trade unionism by the Ministerial Regulations of 1998–99 and then by Law No. 21/2000 on Trade Unions. Under the Trade Union Law, as few as ten workers could form a trade union and multiple unions were permitted to operate in a single workplace. These provisions were much less prescriptive than those in earlier regulations with regard to the form trade unions could take, permitting workers to organise not only on a sectoral basis but also according to occupation or on any other basis that "workers desire". Government control over trade unions was also loosened under the law, which decreed that trade unions needed only to "become listed" with the Department of Manpower rather than having to register. The 2000 law also included a general provision for the right of civil servants to organise, to be regulated under another law, which as of early 2009 had yet to be drafted. However, it still contained provisions giving the government power to withdraw official recognition and allowing the court to dissolve trade unions that contravened the 1945 Constitution or the state ideology, or whose leaders threatened national security.

Another important aspect of Law No. 21/2000 was the way in which it described workers. In this respect, it represented a dramatic departure from the deeply politicised conventions of the New Order described in Chapter Two. During the formulation of the law, there

was much debate publicly and within Parliament over the use of *pekerja* or *buruh*. According to the Chair of the Parliamentary Working Committee:

> Several factions want to maintain the terminology of *pekerja* because, according to them, *buruh* has a pejorative meaning and was linked to Marxist ideology, while several others want to maintain *buruh* because, according to them, *pekerja* was misused by the former New Order regime to make a division among workers (Amru Al Mu'taquim, quoted in *Kompas*, 7 June 2000).[8]

These debates, which echoed those of the early and mid-New Order period, led to a compromise in the wording of the legislation, which referred to trade unions as *serikat pekerja/serikat buruh*.

While maintaining a seven-day notification clause and outlawing strikes before negotiation processes were exhausted, Law No. 13/2003 embodied a more strongly worded commitment to the right to strike than that contained in Law No. 25/1997. The new Manpower Law also foreshadowed changes in disputes resolution procedures, later outlined in Law No. 2/2004 on Industrial Disputes Settlement. The main change in disputes resolution procedures under the 2003 Manpower Law was in the way it described the handling of disputes through a series of arbitration and mediation processes that were to take place independently of the old disputes resolution committees. Law No. 2/2004, which came into effect in January 2006, repealed the pro-labour Law No. 22/1957, thereby formally abolishing the central and regional dispute resolution committees that had sat at the centre of the New Order's tripartite disputes resolution process.[9] Under the 2004 law, if bipartite negotiations failed, disputing parties were offered arbitration or conciliation services. If they refused, the dispute was to be resolved through formal mediation. If all these processes failed, either party had the right to take the dispute to the newly convened industrial court, presided over by a local magistrate and two ad hoc judges, one nominated by employers and the other nominated by the trade unions. These judges serve a five-year term, are required to hold a Bachelor's Degree (in any field) and must have at least five years experience in the field of industrial relations.[10]

Implications for Worker Organising

Trade unionists and labour NGO activists campaigned strongly against aspects of the government's labour law reform agenda which they

believed would disadvantage workers. They especially criticised elements of the new system, such as the new industrial courts, which they argued would make disputes resolution more difficult for workers and trade unions, and protested against the rescinding of pro-labour laws from the 1950s and some of the regulations passed in the early Reformasi period. One of the most emotional protests against the government's legislative agenda occurred after the recision of Ministerial Decision No. 150/2000 on Employment Termination, which gave resigning workers and workers dismissed for serious violations the right to compensation. The Decision was rescinded in May 2001 by Minister for Manpower and Transmigration, Alhilal Hamdi, when employers complained that it provided overly generous compensation for workers. Protests took place in a number of cities across Indonesia including Bandung, Makassar and Sidoarjo. The city centre of Bandung was shut down for several days as protesters flooded the streets and attacked parliament (*Kompas*, 15 June 2001). These demonstrations, which were among the most violent labour protests of the post-Suharto period, prompted the government to announce that it would postpone the regulation that had replaced Ministerial Decision No. 150/2000 and re-enact the original decision (Caraway, 2004; Ford, 2004a).[11] Another high-profile case of violent protest involved the Confederation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions (Konfederasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, KSPSI), the direct successor to the Suharto-era trade union. On 3 May 2006 thousands of workers associated with KSPSI occupied the streets of central Jakarta before tearing down the three-metre-high gate outside the parliamentary complex in protest against proposed amendments to Law No. 13/2003 (*Jakarta Post*, 3 May 2006). This event, which came at the end of several months of demonstrations and discussion regarding the changes to the Manpower Law, occurred only two days after hundreds of thousands of workers associated with other trade unions had demonstrated peacefully against the proposed changes to the law (*Jakarta Post*, 2 May 2006).

Protests of this size were possible because of the explosion in the number of trade unions in Indonesia and their ability to organise workers without government interference. Within months of the fall of Suharto, several national-level unions had formed. By August 2000, 24 national trade union organisations and over 10,000 enterprise unions had registered with the Department of Manpower. After an initial period of contestation involving local pressure groups and international trade unions, three confederations emerged at the national

level. Two of these formed as a result of a split in the Suharto-era trade union federation. The trade unions that remained in the former state-sponsored federation became known as KSPSI, while the Congress of Indonesian Trade Unions (Kongres Serikat Pekerja Indonesia, KSPI) was established as a second-generation breakaway. The third confederation, the Confederation of Indonesian Prosperous Trade Unions (Konfederasi Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia, KSBSI), grew out of the most influential of the alternative unions of the Suharto era. By 2007, over 90 national-level unions were listed with the Department of Manpower, many of them associated with one of these three national confederations.

The scope of trade unionism also expanded dramatically in the post-Suharto period. Under the New Order, trade unions had targeted blue-collar workers employed in the private sector. After the fall of Suharto, there was a small but significant shift in union activity away from the labour-intensive, export-oriented manufacturing sector and towards white-collar, private sector occupations such as finance and journalism, and the public sector. The low base wage earned by production workers in labour-intensive manufacturing forced them to accept large amounts of overtime, thereby limiting their opportunities and willingness to participate in trade union activities outside working hours. It also capped the levels at which union dues could be set, reducing the ability of trade unions to operate successfully without external financial subsidies. Difficulties associated with a precarious membership and a limited capacity to levy trade union dues were less apparent in the public sector and the newly unionised white-collar service industries such as banking and finance, where workers are usually more highly educated and turnover is lower than in blue-collar occupations.

The banking sector became a focus for the re-emergence of white-collar private sector trade unionism when bank workers were involved in widespread demonstrations in early 1999 after 38 insolvent banks closed under the restructuring of Indonesia's financial sector sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (Pardede, 1999: 25–9). At that time the strongest banking union was the Federation of Indonesian Bank and Finance Workers' Organisations (Federasi Organisasi Pekerja Keuangan dan Perbankan Indonesia, FOKUBA). However, the Association of Indonesian Workers' Unions (Asosiasi Serikat Pekerja Indonesia, ASPEK Indonesia), established in November 1998 as a result of a split in FOKUBA, soon became the dominant union in the

sector. ASPEK Indonesia, which represents workers in banking and finance, post and telecommunications, commerce, media and entertainment, printing and graphics and property and property services, is affiliated to KSPI and Union Network International (UNI), the Global Union Federation responsible for service sector workers. Although ASPEK Indonesia has itself since split and has struggled with the demands of establishing effective internal structures, the banking and financial sector remains one of the union movement's most significant white-collar strongholds.

The Habibie government's lifting of restrictions on trade unionism in state-owned enterprises represented an even stronger break from the structures and patterns of New Order industrial relations than the expansion of white-collar private sector unions. Employees in state-owned enterprises had hitherto not been unionised, being ineligible for membership of the All-Indonesia Workers' Union. Their status in the Civil Servants' Corps of the Republic of Indonesia (Korps Pegawai Republik Indonesia, KORPRI), the corporatist vehicle for the Indonesian public service, was also marginal. Only a month after Minister for Manpower Fahmi Idris had announced on 9 March 1999 that President Habibie would enact a regulation permitting freedom of association in state-owned companies (ACILS, 1999b: 19), employees at a number of state enterprises withdrew from KORPRI and formed their own trade unions. The Federation of State-owned Enterprise Workers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja BUMN, FSP-BUMN) was then established in June 1999. In June 2004, a split occurred among the 134 member unions and several 'strategic' unions in the state-owned telephone, electricity and oil companies set up the Federation of Strategic State-Owned Enterprise Workers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja BUMN Strategis, FSP BUMN Strategis). Although many of the state-owned enterprise unions are still controlled by management, the members of FSP-BUMN have been active in discussions about privatisation and have mounted campaigns against corruption in high-profile state-owned enterprises, including the State Electricity Company (Perusahaan Listrik Negara, PLN). Furthermore, the distribution of state-owned enterprises through the far-flung reaches of the Indonesian archipelago means that trade unions such as the State Electricity Company Workers' Union (Serikat Pekerja P'T PLN) have a much wider geographic reach than most of their private sector counterparts, which tend to be concentrated in industrial or urban centres. Finally, in early 2003, all civil servants were formally given permission to form trade

unions, heralding the end of formal government limitations on their freedom of association under the new Manpower Law.[12]

Meanwhile, although light manufacturing remained the focus for most blue-collar organising, some trade unions in heavy secondary industry managed to establish themselves in workplaces with more educated and often highly skilled members who possessed the necessary organisational and management skills to allow their unions to develop strong internal structures. Trade unionists in these industries had more capacity to generate their own financial resources and to acquire and use the technology required to run a modern union. They could also communicate confidently with management and lobby effectively, skills that officials in Indonesia's light manufacturing unions struggled to cultivate. The growing presence of trade unions in these sectors has provided the trade union movement with new sources of expertise and different kinds of bargaining power, power which has proved vital in the reconstruction of the Indonesian trade union movement.

Notwithstanding these developments, the Indonesian labour movement continued to struggle on a number of fronts after Reformasi. Union density has remained negligible, despite the massive increase in the number of trade unions and the expansion in trade union activities. Department of Manpower and Transmigration figures based on data received from the provincial and local level as of September 2005 suggest that the 64 national-level unions and trade union federations meeting the legal requirements for representation in industrial relations institutions had a combined membership of just 3.4 million (Departmen Tenaga Kerja dan Transmigrasi, 2005). Based on these conservative figures — which clearly understate the extent of union membership — only 3.6 per cent of Indonesia's total employed workforce of 95 million as of 2006 were union members (BPS, 2007).[13] At approximately 11 per cent, union density is low even in the formal sector, which accounts for quite a small proportion of employment opportunities, with only 30 to 40 per cent of working men and 20 to 30 per cent of working women employed in waged or salaried positions (Manning, 1998).[14] Although white-collar unions have grown rapidly, union density remains extremely low in white-collar occupations in part because trade unionism is still considered to be the province of blue-collar workers. Even where their wages are no better, many office employees and even shop assistants struggle to identify with blue-collar workers and consequently are reluctant to associate themselves with trade unions.

The ability of trade unions to represent their members even in unionised workplaces is also cause for ongoing debate as many trade unions have yet to establish effective and transparent internal processes or to raise enough money through dues to fund day-to-day union operations. While clearly better than the former one-union policy, multiple unionism also presents a challenge to all levels of the post-Suharto trade union movement. At the national level, the trade union movement is plagued by rivalry between the three confederations that now dominate the labour movement and between individual trade unions. This has affected the movement's ability to influence labour policy and legislation (Caraway, 2004). Provisions allowing multiple unions in a single workplace have caused difficulties for trade unions as well. In some workplaces, management has set up 'yellow' unions that serve the interests of management rather than of workers, while in other workplaces, grassroots conflict diverts the energies of union officials away from core trade union business (Rokhani, 2006). Anecdotal evidence suggests that some plant-level unions have negotiated agreements that allow them to cooperate and present a united front to management, though many have yet to find common ground.

Remarkable progress has nonetheless been made towards better representation of workers' interests both on the shop-floor and at the national level. During the New Order, the official union had only a token presence on national committees and even less influence in most workplaces. Although many employers continued to resist trade union attempts to negotiate at the shop floor or national level, others recognised that they could no longer ignore trade unions in the workplace or in higher-level negotiations. As a result, workers' interests came to be considerably better represented both on the shop floor and nationally within Indonesia's tripartite and bipartite structures than they had been before the fall of Suharto.

The Evolution of the Federation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions

Given the depth of government intervention in the official trade union of the Suharto period, it is perhaps surprising that it survived at all after the fall of the regime. The Federation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, FSPSI) first split in late August 1998 with nine of the 13 industry unions leaving to form the Reformed Federation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia Reformasi, FSPSI-Reformasi). When

the textile, footwear and clothing sector union left FSPSI-Reformasi in 1999, the federation was already well in decline. Its fate was sealed in 2003 when the Congress of Indonesian Trade Unions (Kongres Serikat Pekerja Indonesia, KSPI), the second of the three confederations that have dominated the decade after the fall of Suharto, was formed by 11 trade unions, including nine of the sectoral unions formerly in FSPSI-Reformasi. KSPI quickly sought and eventually gained affiliation with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). What remained of FSPSI was then restructured as the Confederation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions (Konfederasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, KSPSI), which is still the largest trade union confederation in Indonesia.

As Teri Caraway (2008) has argued in her detailed account of these splits, FSPSI's descendants and their affiliates derive some benefits as a result of their legacy union status. In addition to inheriting much of FSPSI's membership and consequently the majority of seats on various tripartite committees, leading figures in KSPSI and KSPI maintained important political and bureaucratic links. Furthermore, despite losing most of its former state subsidies, KSPSI still owned the physical assets amassed by FSPSI during the Suharto period. KSPSI (and many of its affiliated unions) retained access to a company-based check-off system, under which employers automatically deducted union dues from workers' wages. As compulsory payment of union dues is no longer mandatory in unionised workplaces, new unions have difficulty convincing employers to set up check-off systems. However, Indonesia's legacy unions also inherited undemocratic structures and an organisational culture characterised by a lack of transparency.

KSPSI affiliates have suffered particularly from their reputations as 'status quo' unions, despite differences in the modus operandi of those affiliates and examples of grassroots activism within its workplace units (Interviews, June 2007). By contrast, KSPI for a time enjoyed the unqualified confidence of influential international actors including the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), the ILO and the ICFTU (Interviews with Puthut Yulianto, ACILS and Alan Boulton, ILO Jakarta, July 2003). Although this support later declined, KSPI maintained its status as the most widely recognised confederation internationally and counts a large proportion of Indonesia's internationally affiliated unions amongst its members. KSPI itself is extremely weak but some of its affiliates have emerged as examples of best practice by Indonesian standards. Most impressive

amongst these has been the Federation of Indonesian Metalworkers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Metal Indonesia, FSPMI), which has benefited from strong leadership, a relatively educated constituency and generous but cautious support from the International Metalworkers' Federation (Interviews, July 2005 and June 2007). Unlike most of the other trade unions associated with KSPSI and KSPI, the Metalworkers undertook a radical restructuring, eliminating cumbersome and bureaucratic management structures and instituting the strongest policy on dues of any large trade union in Indonesia, under which dues flow first to the centre and then down to individual branches. FSPMI's ample financial resources have allowed it to purchase office buildings and to introduce data management systems superior to those of any other Indonesian trade union. The benefits of these systems are clear in terms of membership numbers and commitment in its strongholds in West Java and Batam (Ford and Tjandra, 2007).[15]

KSBSI, FNPBI and Other National Unions

The third national-level confederation active in the decade after the fall of Suharto was the Confederation of Indonesian Prosperous Trade Unions (Konfederasi Serikat Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, KSBSI), which grew out of the most influential of the alternative unions of the Suharto era. Its predecessor, the Indonesian Prosperous Trade Union (Serikat Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, SBSI), was invited to register formally as a trade union in mid-1998, immediately after the regulatory framework was relaxed. Soon after, SBSI was asked to participate in negotiations over labour law reform. SBSI restructured as a confederation in April 2003 and gained affiliation to the World Confederation of Labour. In the same year, KSBSI experienced a serious split as a result of internal accusations that its founder Muchtar Pakpahan was misappropriating funds and politicising the union (Interviews with KSBSI officials, June 2003). KSBSI has encountered many of the same problems as the other confederations but has also had to deal with challenges related specifically to its history and relationship with Pakpahan, whose high domestic and international profile created difficulties for leadership renewal. Moreover, KSBSI was heavily dependent on overseas funding. Its 2003 triennial report showed that membership dues accounted for just 2.3 per cent of its total income, while 84 per cent came from overseas donations, suggesting that SBSI relied even more on outside funding than KSPI in that period (DPP-SBSI, 2003). The risks

associated with such heavy dependence on donors became clear when KSBSI experienced financial hardship following the contraction of international funding sources after the 2003 split. Nevertheless, the confederation has remained a significant force, with a self-claimed membership of 1.7 million in 2005 (Sinaga, 2005).[16]

Dita Sari's National Front for Indonesian Workers' Struggle (Front Nasional Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia, FNPBI), which grew out of the Indonesian Centre for Labour Struggle (Pusat Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia, PPBI), was another important presence nationally and internationally until the mid-2000s. FNPBI attempted to register twice during the Habibie interregnum with no success. Both applications were rejected because FNPBI refused to promote Pancasila Industrial Relations, thereby contravening Article 7 of Ministerial Regulation PER-05/MEN/1998 (ACILS, 1999c: 18). Having developed branches in a number of cities in Java and North Sumatra (Kusnadi, 2002: 36), FNPBI finally gained official recognition on 18 September 2000 (Sinaga, 2000).

Domestically, FNPBI has continued to be divisive. Its openly leftist stance and choice of a political approach to trade unionism forced FNPBI to the periphery of the labour movement.[17] For example, just a week before it succeeded in registering, the Director of the Industrial Relations Division of the Department of Manpower and Transmigration claimed that FNPBI "still had a long way to go" to achieve registration because "trade unions may not become engaged in politics and have no reason to provide political education" (Mardjono quoted in *Kompas*, 12 September 2000). Perhaps most controversially, FNPBI has continued to rely largely on mass mobilisation strategies, engaging with broad issues through campaigns against globalisation and outsourcing rather than concerning itself with factory-based organising, throwing its resources into supporting the Democratic People's Party (Partai Rakyat Demokratik, PRD) and its successor, the People's United Opposition Party (Partai Persatuan Oposisi Rakyat, PPOR) in the 1999 and 2004 election campaigns (Interview with Dita Sari, July 2003). Nonetheless, FNPBI has maintained a significant international reputation because — like Muchtar Pakpahan — Dita Sari is very well known abroad. It is testament to her international standing that, despite its political stance, FNPBI received financial support from ACILS in the early years of the post-Suharto period.

Some completely new national-level unions were also established. A significant independent national federation, which in part represents

the new prominence of white-collar unionism, is the Federation of Independent Workers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Mandiri, FSPM), whose members include trade unions in large, foreign-owned hotels in Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta. FSPM, which is affiliated to the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), is one of a growing number of unions outside the KSPI with direct connections to the international labour movement.[18] Its member unions in the hotel sector have engaged in a series of high-profile campaigns, including a campaign against the Shangri-La Hotel group in 2000, and have since had considerable success in pressuring the multinational companies that own five-star hotels to allow workers to unionise.

A number of other national trade unions have emerged, many of them religiously based. Some trade unions of this kind are reconstituted pre-New Order, non-Communist unions that had been absorbed into the All-Indonesia Labour Federation (Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, FBSI) in 1973. Although small, these unions have been influential in terms of the ideological character of the labour movement. Most of the reconstructed pre-New Order trade unions, like the Indonesian Association of Muslim Unions (Gabungan Sarekat Buruh Islam Indonesia, GASBIINDO), were still led by the men who served in those unions before 1973 and were little more than a nostalgic attempt to revive the past with little grassroots support and no chance of leadership renewal. The Indonesian Muslim Workers' Union (Sarekat Buruh Muslimin Indonesia, Indonesian, Sarbumusi), affiliated to the powerful Java-based religious organisation Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), is a partial exception to this generalisation. Sarbumusi is most active in the NU stronghold of East Java (see, for example, *Detik*, 19 November 2008) but has branches as far away as the Sumatran province of Riau. It has a solid grassroots membership and has represented workers in disputes resolution (Personal Communication with Teri Caraway, 23 January 2009).

Several new religiously based unions were also formed in the early New Order period, including the Brotherhood of Muslim Workers (Persaudaraan Pekerja Muslimin Indonesia, PPMI). Formed in 1998, PPMI was headed by Muslim academic, lawyer and former student activist Eggi Sudjana until 2005, when he stepped down to become a parliamentary candidate for the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP). PPMI split a year later, leading to the formation of the Brotherhood of Muslim Workers '98 (Persaudaraan

Pekerja Muslimin Indonesia '98, PPMI '98). Like the reconstituted religious unions, PPMI was influential in manoeuvrings at the national level between unions, business and government during the Habibie interregnum but has failed to establish a strong ongoing presence in the absence of a committed constituency and reliable funding.

International Influence

An important aspect of all these developments has been the strength of international intervention. Indonesia's system of industrial relations had been influenced by international debates and organisations before and during the New Order. After the fall of Suharto, however, a much larger number of external players had the opportunity to shape the future of labour representation. As a result, the form that the Indonesian labour movement assumed after 1998 was strongly influenced by international labour bodies, including the International Labour Organisation, the Global Union Federations and national Solidarity Support Organisations like ACILS. Indeed, the extent to which trade unions seized the opportunities of the Habibie period was shaped almost as much by international labour bodies and Solidarity Support Organisations' decisions about which local organisations should be supported, as by the actions of local trade unionists themselves.

The international labour movement pursued two main agendas in Reformasi Indonesia. The first of these involved the promotion of a single peak trade union organisation. Attempts to form a peak trade union body began during the Habibie interregnum when the ICFTU began informally encouraging 'closer cooperation' between the larger trade union federations of the time. At least two short-lived umbrella organisations were established in 1999. The Indonesian Confederation of Trade Unions (Konfederasi Serikat Buruh Indonesia, KSBI), which brought together PPMI, GASBIINDO and the Amalgamated Indonesian Free Trade Unions (Gabungan Serikat Pekerja Merdeka Indonesia, Gaspermindo), was formed on 13 May. Two months later, on 16 July, ACILS facilitated the formation of Unionists' Solidarity Forum (Forum Solidaritas Unionis, FSU), which brought together SBSI, FSPSI-Reformasi, Sarbumusi, FOKUBA and FNPBI (ACILS, 1999a: 16).[19] In 2002, a third attempt was made, this time with direct support from the ICFTU, resulting in the establishment of KSPI. Pressure on KSPI to cooperate more closely with Pakpahan's KSBSI increased when the ICFTU and the World Confederation of Labour announced their

plans to merge. The ILO has also continued to advocate the formation of a single peak trade union council that would bring together the three existing trade union confederations (Boulton, 2006).

The other main area of international influence concerned the promotion of a form of trade unionism that focused on workplace bargaining and the social-economic interests of workers rather than on politics. Most Solidarity Support Organisations active in Indonesia after the fall of Suharto came from European countries with Social-Democratic labourist traditions that included cooperation with a centre-left political party. In the tradition of the Revisionists, these Solidarity Support Organisations were largely in favour of the continued separation of labour's political and economic struggles, a perspective that significantly affected the types of unions receiving international support. As noted earlier, the leftist FNPBI at first received international funding but failed to receive ongoing support from the international trade union movement because of its political agenda and lack of focus on workplace-level organising and collective bargaining. Likewise, although KSBSI has always firmly acted from within the Social-Democratic tradition, a spokesperson interviewed in July 2003 said that the organisation was working hard to present a less militant image in order to meet international expectations. In short, the trade unions that benefited most from international intervention were the middle-of-the-road unions intent on developing a strong workplace-level presence.

The choices made by international labour organisations with regard to the allocation of funds and program assistance therefore favoured some kinds of trade unions over others, in part determining which trade unions survived and the characteristics they developed. At the same time, the availability of large amounts of external funding from international sources made the difficult work of due collection unattractive, especially for large trade unions. As a result, some large trade union organisations, most notably KSBSI, failed to establish structures and processes that were able to sustain their activities once foreign funding decreased. Thus while international support has been invaluable, it has come at a price. As one NGO activist observed in 2006:

> Sometimes unions don't grow from the bottom up, from the factory level. They start from the national level first, and then claim responsibility for grassroots-level growth. This has a lot to do with the targets of the foreign unions. They're just like

> NGOs, you know — just like donors. They say, "I've given you this much money. Now where's the *output*?" (Worker Interview AV, 15 August 2006).

Most international trade unions and other national trade union-funded Solidarity Support Organisations focused only on the main trade union confederations and their members, to the exclusion of both labour NGOs and small trade unions, including those with NGO links (Interview with ACILS staff, July 2003). Given the difficulty in working with large numbers of small trade unions, this strategy was based partly on pragmatism. However, it also reflected the position on NGOs taken by the international trade union movement: that while cooperation with NGOs is possible, those NGOs can never be part of the labour movement in their own right.

Impact on Labour NGOs

Grassroots labour NGOs were adversely affected by the growing involvement of the international labour movement in Indonesia and by the retreat of the non-union donors that had funded their programs. Moreover, their position was challenged by the fact that the worker groups that had formerly depended on them could now form independent, officially recognised trade unions. Indeed, many of the most successful small trade union federations, independent plant unions and trade unions operating above the plant level on a sectoral or regional basis of the post-Suharto period grew out of the clandestine worker groups associated with student groups or NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s. The easiest and most popular way for NGO-sponsored worker groups to gain official status after the fall of the New Order was to become an independent plant-level union, but some groups attempted to create other trade union forms. The Surabaya-based Regional Labour Union (Serikat Buruh Regional, SBR), which was formed just weeks before the fall of Suharto by worker groups supported by the NGO Humanika, is an example of an NGO-sponsored union in which workers were organised by region rather than by industry or workplace. Another good example of this kind of geographically based union is the Greater Jakarta Labour Union (Serikat Buruh Jabotabek, SBJ), established in October 1998 by a number of labour groups including the Jabotabek Workers' Association (Perkumpulan Buruh Jabotabek, PBJ), the Bandung Workers' Group (Kelompok Buruh Bandung, KBB),

the Concerned Workers' Group (Kelompok Peduli Diri, KPD) and the Association of Catholic Workers (Paguyuban Pekerja Katolik, PPK) (Interview with trade unionists from SBJ, 13 January 2000). These geographically based unions were initially unable to register because the formation of regional unions and union associations contravened Ministerial Regulations passed in 1998 and 1999. After the passage of Trade Union Law No. 21/2000 made registration possible for geographically based or cross-sectoral unions, unions affiliated with the Association of Independent Labour Unions (Gabungan Serikat Buruh Mandiri, GSBM), a small union federation sponsored by the Jakarta-based NGO, the Justice and Welfare Forum (Yayasan Forum Adil Sejahtera, YFAS) and the Association of Independent Labour Unions (Gabungan Serikat Buruh Independen, GSBI), a regionally based federation in light manufacturing in Bogor, Tangerang and Bekasi, also achieved formal union status.

Some of these small NGO-sponsored trade unions formed higher-level alliances. Independent plant-level unions with links to the Jakarta Workers' Service (Pelayanan Buruh Jakarta, PBJ) in the districts of North Jakarta, Tangerang, Serang, Bekasi and Bogor created regional union forums in each of those areas. Those forums, in turn, became members of the Workers' Alliance for Change (Aliansi Buruh untuk Perubahan, ABP). ABP was mainly self-funded and ran independently, although PBJ provided them with an office and assisted with education and training (Interview with activist from PBJ, 28 November 2007). A second kind of trade union association established links between trade unions associated with different student groups and labour NGOs along with other small unions. One example of this kind of initiative was the Committee of Independent Unions Action (Komite Aksi Serikat Buruh Independen, KASBI), founded in 2003. KASBI, which later changed its full name to the Congress of Indonesian Unions Alliance (Kongres Aliansi Serikat Buruh Indonesia, KASBI), is a grouping of 21 unions in the Greater Jakarta area and West Java. Its members included a number of affiliates of FNPBI, alongside trade unions with a history of NGO sponsorship such as GSBM, the Medan-based Indonesian Plantation Union (Serikat Buruh Kebun, SerBuk) and the Surabaya-based People's Labour Union (Serikat Buruh Kerakyatan, SBK) (Interview with KASBI activists, 16 October 2006). KASBI and a number of other small unions and union federations are in turn members of the Workers Demand Alliance (Aliansi Buruh Menggugat, ABM), a network of 33 unions located mostly in Java, but also in

Kalimantan and Sulawesi. Initially a broad coalition of mainstream and small unions, as well as NGOs and other groups concerned with labour issues, ABM was set up in 2005 as a vehicle for campaigning against Manpower Law No. 13/2003. A number of NGOs, including the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Jakarta, LBH Jakarta) and YFAS have maintained links to ABM, which has since positioned itself as an alternative confederation to the 'big three'. ABM's members extend the full length of the ideological scale from FNPBI affiliates to PPMI. It promotes leftist social and political objectives such as free health and education, the abolition of corruption and the nationalisation of industry along with decent wages and the abolition of outsourcing and contract work, a platform that leaders believe can be embraced by all (ABM, 2006; Interview with activist from ABM, 11 May 2007).

These NGO-sponsored unions and trade union federations and the broader networks to which they belong have faced perhaps even bigger challenges than those faced by their legacy-union counterparts. Many of them have relied on fragile membership bases, often in light manufacturing industries, and their often brittle internal structures have tended to be dependent on charismatic 'founding fathers'. Their financial resources and skills bases are seldom adequate, in part because international labour organisations are reluctant to work with or fund individual enterprise-based trade unions, forcing the trade unions that emerged from the NGO-sponsored worker groups of the late Suharto period to rely either on dues or on indirect access to international resources through their NGO links.[20] Some grassroots trade unions, like those in GSBM, continued to work with the NGOs that helped establish them (Interview with Nining Elitos, General Secretary of GSBM, September 2005). In other cases, conflict over resources and relationships led to acrimonious splits between trade unions and their NGO sponsors, or even within the trade union itself. GSBI, which originally had links with Arist Sirait Merdeka's NGO Sisbikum, cut its ties in late 2001 after an extremely public falling-out over Sisbikum's unwillingness to allow the trade union to take control of its programs and has since had no contact (Interviews with Arist Merdeka Sirait and GSBI unionists, February 2000). Not long after, SBJ also split as a result of differing opinions about Bhakti Pertiwi's role, leading to the establishment of SBJ-Struggle and three other splinter unions (Interviews with members of SBJ and SBJ-Perjuangan, 20 March 2003; Interview with SBJ activist, 30 July 2006).

Despite this increased conflict and loss of influence, NGOs continued to play a crucial role in the reconstruction of organised labour. In addition to working with the trade unions that they had helped to create, labour NGO activists continued to promote grassroots labour activism in the plant-level branches of trade unions associated with the main confederations. For example, PBJ has continued to engage with the worker-activists they helped to infiltrate FSPSI workplace units before the fall of Suharto, some of whom later became influential figures at higher levels in the affiliates of KSPSI and KSPI. Other grassroots NGOs have established institutional links with the trade union movement, assisting unions in areas of ongoing weaknesses such as research, education and training, labour law and organisational procedures. The clearest example of this is the Trade Union Rights Centre (TURC), which is funded by the Confederation of German Trade Unions (Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB) to provide trade union and legal training to members of a broad spectrum of trade unions, including a number of influential trade unions associated with KSPI such as the Chemical, Energy and Mineworkers' Union (Serikat Pekerja-Kimia, Energi dan Pertambangan, SP-KEP) and the Federation of Indonesian Metalworkers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Metal Indonesia, FSPMI).

Trade unions and NGOs have also begun to cooperate in public advocacy campaigns. At first these initiatives were restricted to trade unions that had existing NGO ties but from the mid-2000s they extended to involve larger unions. The first joint campaign of note was the campaign against labour legislation in the Habibie interregnum, coordinated by the Committee for Action on 1 May (Komite Aksi Satu Mei, KASM). Other cooperative efforts included the Worker and NGO Forum for Workers' Justice (Forum Buruh dan LSM untuk Keadilan Buruh, FBLKB), which was active from the end of 1999 to the middle of 2001. A new advocacy forum called the Committee against the Oppression of Workers (Komite Anti Penindasan Buruh, KAPB) was established soon after Megawati assumed the presidency and involved 60 trade unions and labour NGOs (see Komite Anti Penindasan Buruh, 2001). In addition to small independent trade unions, this forum involved some large, mainstream unions associated with KSPI. Trade unions and NGOs also became involved in joint seminar series and workshops, such as those run in Jakarta by the policy NGOs Praxis and the Sedane Institute for Labour Information

(Lembaga Informasi Perburuhan, LIPS) and by international organisations such as the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

Attempts have also been made to form a more permanent forum for NGO-union collaboration. One example is the Indonesian Labour Movement Syndicate (Sindikasi Gerakan Buruh Indonesia, SGBI). Formed in 2002, SGBI brought together trade unions and worker groups in Medan, Jakarta and Surabaya, along with labour NGOs and people's organisations based in Medan, Rantau Prapat, Jakarta, Ungaran, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Malang, Jombang and Makassar (Interview with Ayuni, Humanika, July 2004). The trade unions involved in SGBI felt that workers "needed friends" from campuses and NGOs, whereas its opponents — most notably KASBI — believed that NGOs were interfering with trade union concerns and that trade unionists would be better served by a forum comprising exclusively trade unions (Interview with Sahat, KPS, 5 December 2007). SGBI soon disintegrated but two alternative union-NGO forums called the East Java Workers' and People's Alliance (Aliansi Buruh dan Rakyat Jawa Timur, ABRJT) and the All-North Sumatra NGO and Trade Union Forum (Forum NGO dan Serikat Buruh Se-Sumatera Utara) were later established in Surabaya and Medan (Ford and Tjandra, 2007).

Organised Labour and Formal Politics

Developments in the decade after the fall of Suharto transformed the face of Indonesia's labour movement not just industrially, as trade unionists were freed from the limits imposed on them by state-centred corporatism, but also politically. Under the New Order, trade unions were defined as exclusively socio-economic organisations and trade union engagement in politics had been taboo. Despite its obvious links to Suharto's political vehicle Golkar, SPSI had been prohibited to develop ties with political parties or to become involved in politics in any way. This is not to suggest that all activists who remained in SPSI during the New Order accepted this position, as demonstrated in 1999 when some members sought to re-establish a political role for labour in the form of a labour party called the Indonesian Workers' Party (Partai Pekerja Indonesia, PPI). PPI's founder, Wilhelmus Bhoka, was a pre-New Order trade unionist who had continued working within SPSI during the Suharto era. Other New Order and pre-New Order labour figures involved with the PPI included S.K. Trimurti, a prominent trade unionist, Indonesia's first Minister for Labour

(1947–48) and a member of the Sukarno-era Indonesian Labour Party (Partai Buruh Indonesia, PBI). Most legacy unionists, however, continued to oppose trade union involvement in formal politics.

With the exception of Dita Sari and other activists in the leftist PPBI, the alternative unions of the New Order period had also publicly rejected a role in electoral politics for labour. PPBI argued for political unionism along Leninist lines, whereby the role of trade unions was to support a revolutionary party in the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat. By contrast, New Order Indonesia's first independent trade union, the Solidarity Free Trade Union (Serikat Buruh Merdeka Setia Kawan, SBM-SK) was deeply divided by debates about politicisation — debates that eventually destroyed the organisation. In the early 1990s, Muchtar Pakpahan, the founder of SBSI, also argued that the primary purpose of trade unions was to achieve socio-economic change on behalf of their members and that this was best achieved by politically unaffiliated trade unions. Meanwhile, although labour activists associated with many of the better-known labour NGOs firmly rejected the New Order's attempts to limit workers' freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively, they too largely accepted the New Order's negative interpretation of political unionism, arguing that involvement in formal politics would hinder the ability of trade unions to serve their members' interests.

After the fall of Suharto, government ministers and bureaucrats continued to mobilise the rhetoric of the New Order period in their critiques of political labour. When PPI was founded, then Minister for Manpower, Bomer Pasaribu, expressed concern that the party would be exploited as a vehicle for its founders' political interests, thereby recreating the conditions of the Old Order era when workers "were used as political targets in general elections and then they were left behind" (*Merdeka*, 5 September 1998). Political parties were later explicitly prohibited from interfering in trade union affairs by Ministerial Decision No. 201/1999 on Worker Organisations. The concept of the 'outsider' also continued to have currency with bureaucrats and government officials. For example, the District Head of Bandung, H.U. Hatta Djatipermana, told a meeting of employers that they should "reject the presence of provocateurs in their factories" (*Pikiran Rakyat*, 27 October 1999). Similarly, after the Bandung riots in May–June 2001, officials condemned the demonstrations for not being "purely the actions of workers" (*Kompas*, 19 June 2001). Trade unionists were at first equally uneasy about the politicisation of labour and it took

several years before the fundamental assumptions on which Indonesian unionism was based began to erode. Pakpahan was the first high-profile figure in the alternative labour movement to change his public position on political labour, establishing a labour party soon after Reformasi. However, his decision was as controversial within KSBSI as outside it (Ford 2003).

Pakpahan's National Labour Party (Partai Buruh Nasional, PBN) and Bhoka's Indonesian Workers' Party (Partai Pekerja Indonesia, PPI) were two of four parties that claimed to represent labour within the 48 parties that participated in the election. The other two were the All-Indonesia Workers' Solidarity Party (Partai Solidaritas Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, PSPSI) and the Workers' Solidarity Party (Partai Solidaritas Pekerja, PSP), both rumoured to be fronts for Suharto loyalists. A fifth party, the Workers' and Students' Party of Struggle (Partai Perjuangan Pekerja dan Pelajar, PPPP) registered with the Department of Justice and Human Rights but did not contest the election (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, n.d.a). The PBN was the most successful of the four labour parties contesting the ballot. However, it received just 140,980 votes, or 0.13 per cent of the national total, well below the 2 per cent threshold required to maintain formal party status. The other three parties that contested the election attracted a collective total of 174,846 votes or 0.17 per cent of all votes cast. If the 78,730 votes cast for the PRD are added to the tally, the five parties received a total of 394,556 votes or just 0.37 per cent of votes cast (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, n.d.b).

In the 2004 election, Pakpahan's re-constituted Social Democratic Labour Party (Partai Buruh Sosial Demokrat, PBSD) was the only labour party among the 24 parties listed on the ballot paper. A number of other 'labour' parties also registered or re-registered after 1999, including the curiously named Party of Indonesian Businesspeople and Workers (Partai Pengusaha dan Pekerja Indonesia, PPPI). In addition to PBSD, the Indonesian Labour Force Party (Partai Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, PTKI) and the Indonesian Workers' Congress Party (Partai Kongres Pekerja Indonesia, PKPI) passed the administrative verification procedures of the Department of Justice and Human Rights to qualify for the election (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, 2004a; 2004b). However, only PBSD passed the final stage of verification (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, 2004c). Although FNPBI identified the 2004 election as its major concern for 2003–04, the PRD's successor PPOR failed the third stage of verification. But despite the smaller number of labour

parties contesting the election, the labour vote in 2004 was marginally better than in 1999. In total, PBSD attracted 636,397 votes, or 0.56 per cent of the total votes cast (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, n.d.b). Although this was a significant improvement on PBN's result in 1999, it was still dismal relative to the size of the industrial labour force. Of the 44 parties involved in the 2009 election, only two — PPPI and Pakpahan's reconstituted Partai Buruh — purported to represent workers as their primary constituency. PPPI received 745,625 votes, or 0.72 per cent, while Partai Buruh received 265,203, or 0.25 per cent of votes (*Kompas*, 10 May 2009).

The Return of Political Labour?

Trade unionists' initial suspicion of formal politics suggested that they remained bound to a conservative interpretation of Revisionist principles, an interpretation in which intellectuals had no place in trade unions and trade unions had no place in politics. As Törnquist (2004: 392) has noted, "wage labourers, and many trade union activists too, [did] not see any relations between struggles in the workplace and those over politics". However, there was a remarkable change in union attitudes towards politics after the 2004 election.[21]

Fierce debates about the 'proper' function and composition of trade unions continued but the shift to a decentralised political system created new opportunities for labour politics that proved impossible to ignore. A number of major trade unions associated with the KSPI began experimenting with local political contests for executive and legislative positions and planning for the national-level election. Most notable among these have been the Federation of Indonesian Metal-workers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Metal Indonesia, FSPMI) and the National Workers' Union (Serikat Pekerja Nasional, SPN), both of which formulated aggressive strategies for the 2009 elections. The political parties themselves, which began approaching trade unionists to stand as candidates in local assemblies, served as a catalyst in this process. In addition to wooing large unions such as FSPMI and SPN, parties including PKS, PAN and PDI-P approached labour NGO activists and high-profile members of NGO-sponsored unions to stand for them in local and national elections in the industrial centres of Greater Jakarta, East and West Java, North Sumatra and Batam.

Trade unionists understand the difficulties of getting labour interests on the agenda of any of the major parties and many would

like to see a purpose-built labour party. However, most are unwilling to support Pakpahan's Partai Buruh because of its close links to KSBSI and also the ethnic and religious dominance of Christian Bataks in both organisations.[22] In 2008, KSBSI members themselves began to break ranks when a senior figure announced publicly that he planned to stand as a candidate for another party (Interview with KSBSI official, 23 October 2008). In the 2009 election, union figures stood for parties as diverse as Partai Buruh, PDI-P, PKS, PAN and Partai Golkar, as well as Partai Gerindra, the party of Suharto's former son-in-law Prabowo, and General Wiranto's Partai Hanura.

Trade unionists promoting labour's political involvement are well aware of the risks of formal politics, even referring to "practical politics" as a "beautiful princess who tempts us" (*putri cantik yang menggoda*) (Interview with FSPMI official, 23 May 2007). They are also aware that the continuing resistance to political unionism in many parts of the labour movement means that the labour movement is unlikely to be in a position to establish a viable special-interest party for many years to come, if ever (Interviews with trade unionists, 5–17 June 2007). Yet regardless of the success or failure of their political ambitions, the very fact that some mainstream unionists have seriously considered politics represents a sharp departure not only from the ultra-conservative version of Revisionism that characterised the New Order but also from the position taken by the overwhelming majority of trade unionists in the early post-Suharto period. The re-politicisation of mainstream unions like FSPMI in this way signals a new turn in the history of the Indonesian labour movement.

8

The Search for a New Role

The first decade of the post-Suharto period saw a fundamental shift in the relationship between worker-activists and labour NGOs, bringing to a head the tensions that had surfaced in the late New Order period and forcing labour NGO activists to seek ways to redefine their role. NGOs' capacity to continue to contribute to the labour movement was sorely tested by upheavals that followed the financial crisis and Reformasi. Many NGO activists continued to waver between their desire to help workers and their belief that they had no legitimate role in the labour movement. For an influential minority, however, the changes brought by the fall of Suharto prompted a rethinking of the nature of trade unionism and the position of intellectuals in relation to the labour movement. As a result, a small number of labour NGOs have succeeded in creating niches that provide for a longer-term institutional role as labour strategists, educators and advocates. This ongoing institutional engagement speaks directly to theorists of the labour movement and to scholars concerned with labour activism. Events in the decade after 1998 confirmed that a consensus existed under which trade unions were the only legitimate organisational form available to workers and NGO activists were outside intellectuals. At the same time, NGOs' ongoing engagement with labour issues in post-Reformasi Indonesia suggests that it is indeed time to revisit the 'criteria of significance' we impose when determining which institutions are — and are not — part of the organised labour movement.

Internal Reassessments

Reformasi and the end of repression brought an enormous change in the willingness of workers to become involved in the labour movement

and in their consciousness about the importance of organising (Worker Interview AA, 31 January 2000). Conditions were still difficult for labour organising but this was a "time of opportunities and transition" for workers and the organisations that represented them (NGO Interview AE, 21 February 2000). Yet, despite the euphoria associated with workers' newfound freedom to organise (NGO Interview BP, 29 November 2002), there was widespread concern about labour's failure to grasp the opportunities presented by the early years of Reformasi (Aspinall, 1999; Törnquist, 2004). As an activist from a research and policy NGO observed, reflecting on the first year of the post-Suharto period: "Everything was changing. The trouble was identifying opportunities and using them properly" (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000). Worker-activists also felt that they had squandered the possibilities of Reformasi. As one noted, "After Suharto stepped down, an opportunity opened up, but workers haven't had the capacity to take advantage of it" (Worker Interview AJ, 5 June 2001). In the eyes of some labour NGO activists, this inability to seize the moment represented a failure on the behalf of labour NGOs themselves.

Like everyone else in Indonesia, labour NGO activists were caught by surprise when Suharto resigned from the presidency on 21 May 1998. As a result, they were ill prepared to help workers take full advantage of the fluid situation under President Habibie. As a Surabaya-based NGO activist observed, reflecting on the immediate post-Suharto period:

> Workers needed NGOs to provide analyses of the political situation, analyses of the future.... That's what labour NGOs should have been doing all through the 1990s. NGOs should have been ready when the opportunity arose for workers to unionise. We should have read the situation better and been ready for it. We had no idea Suharto would fall and, when it happened, we had no idea what to do (NGO Interview BX, 20 August 2006).

As a result of this unpreparedness, the labour movement developed haphazardly once restrictions on organising had been lifted.

Almost every labour NGO activist interviewed in the early months of the Habibie interregnum was sceptical about the credentials of most of the newly registered trade union federations. Reflecting on this period some years later, one Surabaya-based NGO activist described the national-level unions that appeared in 1998 as "sandcastles lacking strong foundations" (NGO Interview BO, 30 November

2002). As this activist went on to observe, however, the large unions were not the only ones facing difficulties. Small NGO-sponsored unions had their own set of problems, many associated with their NGO background:

> Many of the unions that emerged out of NGO-sponsored worker groups have a lot of problems. The trouble is that worker-activists that have been associated with NGOs adopt NGO attitudes. Unionists who have NGO links tend not to be as feudalistic as those without an NGO background but that can be a problem in itself. The ones associated with an NGO tend to be over the top in their attempts to appear democratic but it's often really shallow — just like it is in NGOs. And there tends to be a lot of conflict in NGO-associated unions too. If SPSI people have a fight, they slog it out behind closed doors. That doesn't happen with NGO unions. If they have a fight, they split. It's often about access to international resources, about who gets access to the money, which is still controlled by the NGO. They're just like NGOs, you know, and the trouble is, they've taken on all their bad characteristics. But NGO-affiliated unions are still better than unions established by political parties, like PRD, or PKB or PAN. Those unions really have to toe the party line (NGO Interview BO, 30 November 2002).[1]

Nevertheless, at the grassroots, the purpose and activities of labour NGOs were fundamentally challenged by the ability of trade unions to register. As one grassroots NGO activist observed:

> NGOs had positioned themselves as the representatives of worker groups, but now those worker groups can represent themselves by forming a union, with all their weaknesses and strengths. So who does the NGO represent or act for now? Divisions are clearly forming because NGO activists don't consider themselves in the same category as the workers while unionists don't consider NGO activists in the same category as themselves either (NGO Interview BP, 29 November 2002).

This increasing antagonism forced NGOs to re-evaluate every aspect of their contribution to worker organising and the labour movement. As another grassroots activist argued:

> NGOs had to change. We had to re-evaluate our position. The methods we used to use don't work anymore. In the past we

> stood beside workers (*mendampingi*), but now workers want to self-actualise (*mengaktualisasikan diri*) (NGO Interview AT, 24 February 2000).

As these reflections suggest, labour NGO activists were well aware of the need to re-evaluate their role. The question that arose was what precisely labour NGOs should be doing now that it was possible for workers to form independent trade unions.

Initial Insecurity

In the first few months after the fall of Suharto, labour NGO activists struggled to reposition themselves. As one activist commented, the "problem was that NGOs didn't put their heads together, they just rushed into the post-Suharto period" (NGO Interview AL, 8 March 2000). Policy NGOs in particular were unsure of how to proceed in the new climate of uncertainty when boundaries and campaign targets were unclear and previously successful methods of public campaigning no longer seemed to work. During the first flush of Reformasi, previously vocal labour NGOs failed to capitalise on opportunities to exert pressure on a transitional government vulnerable to domestic and international demands for change. Those middle-class activists who had used labour issues to channel their criticisms of the political situation more generally were able to address those agendas directly. For some grassroots NGOs, adjusting to the new climate meant changing their focus from grassroots organising to policy advocacy or leaving the labour movement altogether. Similarly, a number of policy NGOs began to diversify their interests in response to what they saw as national priorities, sometimes in conjunction with a continued interest in labour issues and in other cases, in its place. Some individual activists dramatically shifted focus, often amidst great acrimony. The most controversial example of this was Teten Masduki, the prominent head of the labour division of the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia, YLBHI). Teten, who received extensive publicity for his work with Indonesian Corruption Watch in the months leading up to the 1999 general election, was widely criticised by other labour NGO activists for "deserting" labour (for example, NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000).

When explaining their reservations about the future, activists from policy NGOs pointed to the decline in public interest in labour issues, the breakdown of inter-NGO forums and the fragmentation

of labour representation as the sources of their pessimism. Issues surrounding the organisation of labour were notably absent from public debate in the early months of Reformasi, when the public voice of the policy activists who remained committed to labour issues was drowned out by higher-profile concerns such as corruption, violence and political instability. As a result, there was a marked decrease in media coverage during the Habibie interregnum. Unlike the late New Order period, when labour had been a dominant issue in the daily press, labour issues were now peripheral. What press coverage there was focused overwhelmingly on migrant workers, strikes, wages and mass layoffs, while the dramatic increase in the number of registered trade unions at that time attracted surprisingly little commentary.[2] NGO statements on female migrant labour and child labour continued to be widely reported but reports citing labour NGO activists' opinions on industrial labour remained scarce throughout 1999. Yet although the opening up of the polity and media reduced NGOs' effectiveness as advocates of workers' rights, there remained what one policy labour NGO activist called "a *politics of representation* [English in the original], where NGOs still thought their voice was the voice of the workers" (NGO Interview AC, 21 March 1999).

The NGOs that sponsored grassroots worker groups were better placed to take advantage of the opportunity initially offered by Reformasi. However, they still faced many new obstacles in their attempts to help workers. Sharp decreases in real wages and mass retrenchments of factory workers during the early months of the Habibie interregnum forced grassroots labour NGOs to question the efficacy of the community-based worker groups they had sponsored during the New Order when independent factory-based unionism was effectively illegal. Indeed, some grassroots labour NGO activists commented on the personal feeling of loss they experienced when it became obvious that their carefully nurtured worker groups and networks were under threat (for example, Interview with YBM activist, 4 January 2000; NGO Interview AU, 4 January 2000). At the same time, new opportunities to organise in the workplace forced grassroots labour NGOs to shift their focus and develop new strategies to encourage the growth of worker organisations in factories — a task for which many were ill prepared.

Although most grassroots labour NGO activists expressed frustration at their inability to take full advantage of new opportunities for factory-based organisation, they believed that they could continue

to help workers. A year after the resignation of President Suharto, activists from all but one of the 14 NGOs surveyed in industrial areas of Greater Jakarta and in West and Central Java at that time agreed that the long-term future of the labour movement lay with some form of factory-based worker organisation. However, there was little consensus on a realistic target for the transition. NGO activists disagreed on whether the benefits of registering a trade union outweighed the uncertainties associated with involvement in the official system in the short to medium term. Some argued that the crisis had proven that community-based groups simply could not cope with the issues facing workers in Indonesian factories and that registration was the only way to overcome workers' vulnerability. Others believed that less formal, unregistered worker groups should simply become more factory-focused but avoid the scrutiny — and the potential discrimination — that registration might bring. At this early stage, most NGO activists were sure they would continue to have some role in the labour movement but there was no shared sense of what that new role should entail.

Growing Confidence

A year later, when I returned to the field after the first general election of the post-Suharto period and the appointment of President Abdurrahman Wahid, labour NGO activists were far more positive about their own future than they had been in early to mid-1999, although they were not especially optimistic about the future of organised labour itself. This time, the positions of policy and grassroots labour NGOs were reversed. Despite increasing competition for policy-makers' attention, policy NGOs had adjusted to the new climate and returned to their old campaigning strategies. Labour issues were never again as visible in the media as they had been in the mid-1990s, but by mid-2001 policy NGOs had renewed their public advocacy campaigns, focusing on issues including Labour Day, the shortcomings of the draft trade union law, minimum wages and the arrest in April 2001 of the worker-activist Ngadinah, an employee at a Tangerang factory that produced footwear for export, for allegedly provoking a strike in September of the previous year. Another campaign focus during this period was the appointment of the Secretary-General of FSPSI, Bomer Pasaribu, as Minister for Manpower, an appointment strongly opposed by labour NGOs, student groups and the independent Indonesian

Prosperous Trade Union (Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia, SBSI), all of whom saw it as means of shoring up the official trade union's position in the labour movement.

While the next few years of Reformasi required few changes in the approach adopted by policy NGOs, grassroots NGOs were forced into a fuller reconsideration of their role. NGO activists from working-class backgrounds believed this task required them to become more visible. According to a member of Bhakti Pertiwi, one of the worker-led labour NGOs that had operated clandestinely during the Suharto period:

> We used to organise underground. We were very *low-profile* [English in the original]. People didn't know about Bhakti Pertiwi. They just knew us as individuals. After Suharto fell, we started organising our worker groups into a union. At first we were a bit hesitant about appearing in the open, let alone declaring a union. We were scared that the situation would change again. But then we decided we had to just take the risk (Interview with Bhakti Pertiwi activist, 14 February 2000).

By contrast, many of the middle-class activists who remained involved with industrial labour suggested that NGOs should pull back from organising and focus on providing technical support such as education and training. Their decision to continue to engage with labour issues was made easier by the fact that the majority of worker-activists with NGO connections recognised the role NGOs had played in the reconstruction of the labour movement. In the words of one trade union leader who had been a member of an NGO-sponsored worker group in the 1990s:

> There were lots of NGOs organising workers in Indonesia in the 1990s, so lots of unions that emerged after Reformasi were brought into being by NGOs. We can't deny that (Worker Interview AW, 13 June 2004).

However, this recognition did not guarantee labour NGOs a future role at the grassroots. As an activist from a Christian grassroots NGO complained in March 2000, "There is tension now about NGOs' involvement" (NGO Interview BK, 7 March 2000).

As opportunities to meet and organise became more easily available, workers increasingly resented what they perceived as attempts to control them. In the words of one grassroots NGO activist, reflecting on this period several years later:

> When workers were allowed to unionise, lots of things had to change. The ability to unionise gave workers strength. They felt that unions had equal status with labour NGOs. It took NGOs a while to realise this — that they had to step back from the role they'd taken in the 1990s. They'd been the ones to educate workers about how to organise, to give them knowledge and the skills that they needed. They'd kind of managed them. That wasn't appropriate after 1998, but a lot of labour NGOs just kept on doing it (NGO Interview BW, 7 July 2005).

In many cases, the fact that workers could organise in the workplace demanded a renegotiation of power structures and programs. As a feminist grassroots labour NGO activist noted, "NGOs still want to help but workers now have their own bargaining power — it was never like that before" (NGO Interview AT, 24 February 2000).

NGO activists and worker-activists alike acknowledged that pressures for change already evident in the last few years of the Suharto period became much more evident during Reformasi. They agreed that NGOs' future in the labour movement depended on "mutually agreed, clear roles" for each, under which "NGOs no longer dictate to the unions" (Worker Interview AJ, 5 June 2001). NGO activists said they believed that this required the development of a "cooperative relationship", in which "unions were set free" and labour NGOs acted as a "connector, capable of building a bridge between them ... the government and management" (NGO Interview BI, 1 July 2001).

By mid-2000, activists from all of the 25 labour NGOs examined in this study active at that time had decided that registered trade unions were the most appropriate organisational vehicle for labour, even in the short to medium term. At the grassroots level, this decision to promote the formation of independent unions had far-reaching consequences for labour NGOs. For example, in early 2000 a worker-activist whose Jakarta-based group had since registered as a trade union reported that the NGO with which they were associated had stepped back and now dealt mainly with "higher-level issues", while the trade union itself dealt directly with its members (Worker Interview AC, 4 March 2000). According to another Jakarta-based trade unionist, the role of the NGO with which it was associated changed after 1998, when they became "less directly involved, and supervised more" (Worker Interview AD, 30 June 2001).[3] Similarly, in Medan, the influential Welfare Light Group (Yayasan Kelompok Pelita Sejahtera, KPS) gradually shifted from a model where it provided direct support

to the Medan Independent Labour Union (Serikat Buruh Medan Independen, SBMI) to providing programs open to a wide range of trade unions (Interview with KPS activist, 16 July 2007). In the words of a member of one of the Medan trade unionists, "We don't depend on non-worker activists anymore — we can walk by ourselves now" (Interview with worker activist, 17 July 2007).

There were two main camps among the grassroots labour NGOs that decided to make the break with worker groups they had formerly sponsored. The first group forced the trade unions they had helped to form to become independent. One technique used was the formulation of a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which documented the level of funding and other support the trade union could expect. Commenting on one such case, an NGO activist noted:

> We have a clear commitment to make workers capable, to empower them. It's not just a theory. We've proved it. We developed organisations. We told workers they had to prove themselves, but we also told them we'd help them if they needed it. But that has a limit. If we think that they're capable, we'll leave them. Finished. Even now we've established an MoU. We didn't have anything like that before (NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000).

This 'cold turkey' approach sometimes drew angry responses from worker-activists, who felt they had been at best deserted and at worst betrayed.

The second group of grassroots NGOs took a more incremental approach, withdrawing their support gradually. For example, as one labour NGO activist noted: "We used to invite them to discussions, now they run their own. They can even run training sessions themselves" (NGO Interview AT, 24 February 2000). Worker-activists associated with these NGOs began to assume many more responsibilities as a result of these changes. Some of this second group of NGOs established less formal agreements under which they were to provide services to newly formed trade unions:

> Lots of NGOs that used to run education courses and organise workers have sponsored the formation of trade unions. They've deliberately made agreements with them about who will handle what. For example, while education should be the function of the trade union, NGOs agree to handle it for the time being because the unionists aren't yet capable of doing it (NGO Interview AL, 8 March 2000).

However, NGO activists in both camps recognised the continued reliance of NGO-sponsored unions on those NGOs. As one research NGO activist noted, even if worker groups are encouraged to be independent, "they run back to the NGOs if anything goes wrong or they need something". This is so, she argued, because "Many trade unions have an NGO as their *patron*. In that sense not much has changed, it's just become more formalised" (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000). This assessment was confirmed by a grassroots NGO activist, who observed that "it still becomes obvious in tight situations that the NGOs remain in control" (NGO Interview BI, 1 July 2001).

The lack of skills of trade union organisers was a common reason identified by grassroots labour NGO activists for trade unions' ongoing reliance upon them. This observation reflected both the realities of trade unionism in the early post-Suharto period and the reluctance of NGOs to altogether relinquish their 'guiding' role. Describing the problems experienced by the trade unions his NGO had helped to form, an activist from one NGO observed:

> You have to remember that most worker-activists were born after there was last a real trade union in Indonesia. The new trade unions are like someone who puts up a doctor's sign but tells the patients when they arrive that the doctor is still in training (NGO Interview AL, 8 March 2000).

Trade unionists were only too aware of their lack of skills in some areas. As a trade union leader observed:

> Times have changed, so trade unions must change their position — they can no longer depend on NGOs. We have to be prepared to lead, to take on the things that the NGO used to do, like advocacy. But if my members have problems, they still go to the NGO because it has lawyers and so on, which we don't have. We've got to learn to do these things ourselves (Worker Interview AH, 13 February 2000).

The reluctance of some NGOs to step back from day-to-day involvement in organising activities can thus be explained at least in part by their concerns about workers' ability to run unions without assistance. However, in many cases it stemmed less from an objective assessment of the ability of worker groups to operate independently than from the NGOs' disinclination to relinquish control. In particular, worker-activists commented on the continuing reluctance of NGOs to allow

worker networks to emerge independently. Workers were eager to make connections with other worker groups and to establish their own networks. As one trade union official said in the presence of an NGO activist, NGOs "should not shut their doors to members of other unions" (Worker Interview AH, 13 February 2000). However, NGOs often discouraged such connections for fear that they would undermine their influence with 'their' particular worker group.

Permitting workers to speak for themselves presented another challenge to labour NGOs that continued to work closely with the unions that grew out of the worker groups they had sponsored. As an activist from an NGO involved in legal aid and organising observed:

> Before, only NGOs discussed workers' issues. Now, we send workers to seminars and workshops. They should be there. We just go with them if the invitation is made out to us. The workers are the ones who are directly concerned here (NGO Interview AZ, 24 March 1999).

Yet despite these efforts to give worker-activists more opportunities, many NGO activists found it extremely difficult to let workers truly speak for themselves. The situation was often complex, as another NGO activist observed, reflecting on the relationship between labour NGOs and the trade unions that had grown out of NGO-sponsored workers groups in Surabaya:

> The problem is that the old patterns continued. On the one hand, worker-activists feel that they are now equal to the NGOs but, on the other hand, there are NGOs that still feel that they are in charge. For example, if there are opportunities to travel overseas or to go to meetings elsewhere in Indonesia, sometimes the NGOs still represent workers rather than sending workers themselves. Sometimes the opposite problem occurs. The NGO is really egalitarian but workers aren't. This is a big problem, especially where NGO figures are really respected. Even if the NGO says *do whatever you want to do* [English in the original], workers still feel they have to ask permission from the NGO if they want to do something (NGO Interview BW, 7 July 2005).

As this suggests, even when both parties were committed to finding a new model for their relationship, this was not always easily achieved.

Tensions between a need for assistance and the resentment on behalf of NGO-sponsored unions towards their subordinate relationship

with the NGOs became a particular source of friction during the Wahid years. This friction resulted in many conflicts between grassroots labour NGOs and trade unions in North Sumatra and throughout Java. In part, these tensions reflected the fact that some NGOs had difficulty imagining — let alone creating — a more equal relationship, and attempted instead to preserve their existing hierarchies and practices. Many NGO activists claimed that their NGOs would be able and willing to disband once the worker groups they had sponsored were 'ready' to function as fully operational trade unions. In practice, however, they were reluctant to move on. According to an activist from a legal aid bureau, some worker-activists interpreted the reluctance of NGO activists to renegotiate their relationships with worker groups to mean that:

> Grassroots labour NGOs began to get nervous about their position .... You could say that they were not ready for the fruits of their efforts — workers have begun to have a critical attitude towards NGOs and are experiencing the euphoria of organising independently (NGO Interview BP, 29 November 2002).

This view was shared by many, including a leader of GSBI, an NGO-sponsored union that had since cut off ties with that NGO:

> There was a lot of tension when we decided to break off all ties. [The NGO] wasn't ready for the enormous changes that happened within the union. They couldn't understand why we suddenly wanted to be independent, wanted to handle our own cases. They asked who was behind it all, who was influencing us. They said we weren't ready. Actually, we weren't sure exactly what we could do either, because they'd never given us the opportunity to manage things ourselves .... But we've been doing it all ourselves for three and a half years now — since 2002 .... A lot of unions that used to be associated with NGOs have done the same thing (Interview with GSBI official, 4 July 2005).

Despite its refusal to deal in any way with its former patron, GSBI did not boycott other NGOs prepared to respect its independence. As the trade unionist went on to note:

> We still have contact with NGOs, but we choose which ones we want to deal with depending on the situation. We are happy to

> take advice from them, but we want to implement it ourselves (Interview with GSBI official, 4 July 2005).

The fact that the union leaders still wished to do so despite GSBI's bad experience with one NGO suggests that they believed that NGOs could still make a contribution to the well-being of the union.

As was the case under the New Order, access to funding was also perceived to be a significant factor in NGOs' attempts — and capacity — to maintain their influence. Indeed, during the period in which Abdurrahman Wahid was president, funding became a point of increasing friction between the grassroots NGOs that continued to be active in labour organising and the worker groups or trade unions associated with them. On the one hand, labour NGO activists complained that "if we ask them to show where the money has gone, it can seem like domination" (NGO Interview BL, 7 March 2000). On the other hand, they argued that "unions can't be expected to deal with a lot of money yet" (NGO Interview BH, 17 June 2001).

Funding was particularly problematic because grassroots and policy labour NGOs alike were affected by changes in the funding priorities of international donors. Many NGOs that previously had been very active found their funding had dried up because international donors had shifted their focus not only to issues other than labour but also to the newly founded trade unions. In fact, hundreds of thousands of dollars of new foreign funds were flowing into Indonesia for trade union activities. Although most was earmarked for the big trade unions without NGO links, the new programs brought into question the brokerage role NGOs had always played. As a result, some worker groups felt they no longer had to accept 'guidance' from NGOs because they no longer had a monopoly over funding opportunities:

> Workers know when NGOs are right or wrong. They make it clear when they've been impoverished by NGOs who are just looking for funding and so on. They're not scared to ask questions now that they've realised that they can perhaps access that funding themselves (NGO Interview AT, 24 February 2000).

In other cases, NGO activists and worker-activists argued that NGOs' continued access to funding, albeit diminished, still allowed them to influence internal trade union processes, from day-to-day activities to the selection of trade union officials (NGO Interview BI, 1 July 2001).

A Continued Role?

The big questions facing grassroots labour NGOs by the end of the Wahid presidency in July 2001 were whether their involvement in the labour movement would continue and, if so, what shape it would take. Three years into the subsequent Megawati administration, they were still trying to identify a new role, fearful that "trade unions would reject them if they did not stay relevant" (NGO Interview CB, 20 May 2004). Part of their concern stemmed from their overwhelming pessimism regarding the state of organised labour in Indonesia by 2004. As one activist commented, "the condition of the labour movement has weakened, perhaps because people were exhausted by the euphoria of 1998" (NGO Interview BY, 15 June 2004).

Lack of unity was — as ever — a very strong theme in critiques of organised labour. NGO activists complained about the increasing weakness and fragmentation in the trade union movement:

> The Indonesian labour movement is badly fragmented .... These days, there are a lot of unions that are really just paper organisations, although many also really do have a strong membership basis. It's a pity that the national arena is controlled by unions that have no substance (NGO Interview BZ, 20 May 2004).

Another activist even compared the current movement unfavourably with that of the late Suharto period and the Habibie interregnum, observing that the Indonesian trade union movement was very weak compared to the independent labour movement of 1980–99 (NGO Interview CA, 19 May 2004). According to a third activist:

> Mutual suspicion between unions is really common .... Unions' different interests have also contributed to the weakening of the labour movement. Unions don't seem to realise that their lack of unity is always going to be exploited by anti-worker forces (NGO Interview CB, 20 May 2004).

By this time, activists were more divided in their assessments of the ongoing role of NGOs in the labour movement than they had been in 2001.

Still 'By Workers, For Workers'

The failure of the trade union movement to consolidate the gains labour made during the Habibie interregnum in some ways strengthened

NGO activists' conviction that they would have a role in the labour movement for some time to come. However, many activists still had misgivings about the legitimacy of that role, arguing that it was only right that NGO involvement in the labour movement should contract. Arguments for the eventual retreat of NGOs from the labour movement were accompanied by Revisionist statements regarding the proper division between non-workers and the worker-run trade union, statements that sometimes referred both to NGO-union relations and to the perceived dominance of non-worker officials and donors in the registered trade unions. In a statement echoing New Order labour discourse, a grassroots labour NGO activist argued that "there are as yet no trade unions that are truly from the workers" (NGO Interview BK, 7 March 2000). This was so, activists argued, because of continued intervention by 'outsiders'. As one policy labour NGO activist complained, "there are no trade unions in the pure sense in Indonesia" because "Indonesian unions cannot be truly independent since their funds come from outside and their leaders are non-workers" (NGO Interview AC, 21 March 1999).

Activists' concept of a 'pure' trade union was based on the difference in the quality of consciousness between workers and the middle class. Another grassroots NGO activist argued that "it is difficult to tell how much all these new trade unions demonstrate the strength of the labour movement because quite a lot of them were established by non-workers or by nostalgic worker-activists from the 1950s who have since become bureaucrats or entrepreneurs" (NGO Interview BG, 21 February 2000). Providing further evidence of the dangers of 'outsiders' intent on pursuing their own interests rather than those of the workers, a third grassroots NGO activist commented:

> The trouble now is that many people 'have a lust' (*bernafsu*) for the chance to form trade unions. They don't care about the workers; they're just after the money from ACILS [American Center for International Labor Solidarity] and whatever (NGO Interview AN, 12 January 2000).

Yet another, evoking the language of the New Order, noted the danger that workers might "be used for political purposes" (NGO Interview BH, 17 June 2001). The policy labour NGO activist cited earlier argued that the trade union movement must "return to its worker roots" if the reconstruction of the labour movement was to be successful:

> What is needed now are not trade unions organised by NGOs, but trade unions that are organised by workers themselves and whose officials are drawn from the working class, because if NGOs organise trade unions, it's easy to make accusations that their interests are not the same as those of the workers (NGO Interview AC, 21 March 1999).

This observation also indisputably reflects the New Order's conservative interpretation of the Revisionist position.

Accepting this position, the majority of NGO activists continued to argue that NGOs must eventually stop performing the 'trade union functions' they had undertaken in the late New Order period, confirming their commitment to a Revisionist model of trade unionism that excluded non-worker intellectuals. As Indrasari Tjandraningsih and Arist Merdeka Sirait declared, trade unions must be run by workers themselves "because they best understand their situation" (*Kompas*, 24 June 2001). Tjandraningsih, the head of the labour division at the research NGO Akatiga, and Sirait, director of the grassroots NGO Sisbikum, argued that:

> We have to be prepared to retreat when workers are capable of handling everything themselves.... Ideally, the unions should run things themselves. We should not become leaders, or show that we organised those unions. We're just friends who have helped them with things they need (*Kompas*, 24 June 2001).

This suggests that, just as for Asmara Hadi of the Printers' Union (Serikat Buruh Pertjetakan Indonesia, SBPI) in the 1950s, these activists feel that their involvement as 'outsiders' in positions of leadership within the labour movement is a necessary but temporary evil in an uneducated society.

As was the case in the late New Order period, it was worker-activists rather than NGOs themselves who have been most convinced of the legitimacy of NGOs' role in the labour movement. As noted earlier, some trade unionists made comments that suggested that they too supported the Revisionist model, wary of the possible effects of continuing NGO influence on their organisations. Overall, however, worker-activists were far less likely to subscribe to Revisionist principles than were labour NGO activists. Some worker-activists believed that NGOs were still required only temporarily, but many others could see no problem in NGOs adopting a long-term — or even permanent — role in the labour movement.

As one worker-activist observed:

> NGOs were really needed in the Suharto period because the conditions were so bad and the people weren't brave enough to stand up to their oppressors. But since Suharto fell, things have changed. NGOs need to reposition themselves to ensure that the people aren't dependent on them forever. But they shouldn't just walk away — they should stand by the workers. We need a *partnership* [English in the original] because the Indonesian people still need support (Worker Interview AX, 4 July 2005).

Similarly, in the words of an activist from an NGO-sponsored trade union:

> Unions are an actor in industrial relations ... NGOs are unions' partners, who can offer constructive criticism. As long as they avoid indoctrination, that's fine (Worker Interview AZ, 13 June 2007).

Drawing on similar themes, another trade unionist commented that NGOs would continue to have a role, so long as they "treated unions as equal partners" and "acted as a supporting system rather than doing the work of unions" (Worker Interview AD, 30 June 2001).

The willingness of worker-activists to entertain the possibility of long-term NGO involvement in the organised labour movement did not diminish over time. This position was best articulated by another trade unionist formerly associated with a grassroots labour NGO:

> Labour NGOs are also part of the labour movement. When they deal with workers, they do so in an attempt to defend them, not in a professional, commercial capacity. Sure they are paid, but they want to help. So the presence of labour NGOs is a very good thing. Unions have to be realistic, and know that they are not the only channel, the only organisation that workers can turn to. NGOs and unions are different, but unions shouldn't be arrogant. They need the NGOs (Worker Interview AV, 15 August 2006).

When asked how his organisation's close association with an NGO had been of benefit after the former worker group became a trade union, another trade unionist offered the following examples:

> It's good to have NGOs because if someone from our union gets arrested by the police in a demonstration, he needs a lawyer to

> help him so he doesn't get abused by the police. Or say if some workers need some research done about wages. That takes a survey and all sorts of things. They can't do a survey! We're talking about factory workers! They don't have the skills to do research like that (Worker Interview AB, 14 February 2000).

As these comments suggest, unlike most NGO activists, these worker-activists — many of them now officials in a registered trade union — could see no fundamental obstacle to the continued engagement of NGOs in the labour movement.

Acceptance of the continued involvement of NGOs was not confined to the minor unions that grew directly out of the NGO-sponsored worker groups of the late New Order period. For example, in 2005 a long-standing member of Muchtar Pakpahan's KSBSI suggested that there was even scope for labour NGOs to continue their organising work:

> Labour NGOs first emerged because there was a need. At that time there was only SPSI and so many workers were unorganised. Now we have the freedom to organise but there's still so much to be done. I'm not sure of the figures but as far as I know only about 10 per cent of Indonesian workers are organised. That means that 90 per cent of workers are not. So NGOs still have a role there. In other words, unions are not — well, perhaps not yet — capable of turning their attention to that 90 per cent. So why shouldn't NGOs do it? It's a great opportunity for unions to cooperate with NGOs in places that unions have problems reaching (Interview with KSBSI official, 11 July 2005).

Some large trade unions with no history of NGO links also saw labour NGOs as a useful source of technical and other kinds of assistance. Leaders of a number of trade unions associated with the Congress of Indonesian Trade Unions (Kongres Serikat Pekerja Indonesia, KSPI) agree that such NGOs can play a valuable and ongoing role in the labour movement and make an effort to involve their members in their programs (Interviews with Thamrin Mossi, Sjaiful and Said Iqbal, November 2007). The fact that some overseas trade unions also decided once again to at least partially channel funding for training and legal support through NGOs rather than directly to unions suggests that they too believe that NGOs should continue to have a role in the Indonesian labour movement.

New Possibilities

NGO activists who supported an ongoing role in the labour movement argued that although some NGOs had indeed ceased to be involved in labour issues, others had taken their place. In Fauzi Abdullah's view:

> Some NGOs will last and others will disappear. In other words, many of the roles they have taken on — and are still performing now — will be taken over by unions. In that sense labour NGOs are temporary. But they'll survive if they take on more specific roles such as producing education modules and teaching union officials how to use them. That would take a lot longer if unions did it themselves. There are some things that will still need an *expert* [English in the original]. That's what the NGOs can do (Interview with Fauzi Abdullah, 9 March 2000).

Activists also pointed to the NGOs which had taken up policy advocacy and/or networking activities and to the NGOs working at the grassroots level which had successfully shifted their focus from directly organising and training workers to activities designed to strengthen and/or support new trade unions.

The decisions of NGO activists to continue contributing to the labour movement a decade after the fall of Suharto rested on several considerations. Many of the activists who resisted the temptation to focus on more fashionable causes had a strong personal commitment to labour issues. They also had ties with particular trade unions, forged through relationships with individual worker-activists established over years and sometimes decades, relationships that even activists who were unsure if there was a long-term niche for NGOs in the labour movement were reluctant to abandon. Activists also emphasised the 'synergy' and 'symbiosis' between trade unions and NGOs, echoing the worker-activists cited earlier. This potential for symbiosis provided a solid foundation for a continuing role for NGOs in the Indonesian labour movement.

Proponents of long-term NGO involvement in the labour movement identified different ways in which the role of NGOs could develop. Although Arist Merdeka Sirait from Sisbikum made public statements about the need for worker-led trade unions, he also identified two possible directions for the "*repositioning* [English in the original]" of grassroots-oriented labour NGOs:

> NGOs could merge with unions. In this case, the NGO would dissolve and its personnel would become part of the mass movement organisation they had once sponsored. Or they could stay separate and become a *supporting system* [English in the original] for the union movement. In that case, NGOs wouldn't merge with unions because they consider the unions a 'product' (*produk*) that must be enlarged and 'facilitated' (*difasilitasi*) until it can stand on its own. When that is achieved, the NGOs can move on to something else (Interview with Arist Merdeka Sirait, 23 February 2000).[4]

Most NGO activists disagreed with the proposition that they could become trade union officials. As an activist from a grassroots Christian NGO explained:

> While NGOs want to help give birth to unions, those unions must be made up of workers themselves. That's where it gets difficult. We feel we are one with workers, but that doesn't make it legitimate for us to be part of a union (NGO Interview AE, 21 February 2000).[5]

Nevertheless, several advocates of this position suggested that individual NGO activists could be absorbed into trade unions to perform specialist roles such as education officers, researchers or legal advisors — a standard practice in other countries. As an activist from another Christian NGO observed:

> If we were invited to join as individuals, that'd be fine. But we should be advisors, not decision-makers. There needs to be a proper procedure.... An NGO couldn't become part of the union structure (NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000).

Eli Salomo, an activist from an NGO called the Labour Advocacy Community (Komunitas Advokasi Buruh, KAB) took a similar position in an extended published interview:

> What should happen is that the NGO activists should integrate with the workers ... whether they like it or not, NGO activists must integrate themselves. They must learn workers' culture, not infect workers with their culture (Salomo, 2005: 25–6, 27).

Salomo claimed that this was the case with KAB which, he said, had 'dissolved itself' in the Cikarang Workers' Communication Forum

(Forum Komunikasi Buruh Cikarang, FKBC). In practice this has meant that members of KAB have become not only members of the Workers' Forum but also sit on its board. He argues that this has created no difficulties because the Forum's executive is dominated by workers and its leader is always a worker:

> The most important thing is that our program is designed to increase their consciousness and their belief in the movement. The majority of NGO activists, like those in KAB, are from the middle class, so they can leave the movement at any time. There's nothing that keeps them there except their commitment. So if the middle class position themselves above the union, then they become uncontrollable. But if they position themselves at the same level as the union, then the middle-class section of the movement can be controlled by the workers.... An authentic labour movement is one that is led by the workers, because the middle class can become whatever they want at any time (Salomo, 2005).

Long-term activist Fauzi Abdullah also agreed that there was no problem with trade union members being non-workers. When describing some long discussions with worker-activists about whether or not NGO activists could be part of the union, he reported the conversation as follows:

> I asked them, "Suppose there was a trade union. Can someone like me be a member?" The workers said that I could join but could not be an ordinary member. I'd be an extraordinary member with different rights from ordinary members. I'm not sure whether it's right in theory, but I agree with that idea. We don't want to be totally divorced because that has always been the government's policy — they always separated workers from their supporters. So if we took that position, we'd be supporting the government. I think we should be involved but know our place. If we always want to lead, then there is a problem (Interview with Fauzi Abdullah, 9 March 2000).

Abdullah's views on this question had changed in the year leading up to this interview. In 1999 he had argued at a strategic planning forum that labour activists "need to differentiate between worker organisations and the labour movement. Outsiders cannot join a trade union, but they can join the labour movement" (Abdullah, 1999). Despite their inconsistency, both of Abdullah's statements identified openings for middle-class activists to function as modern movement intellectuals.

The proposition that middle-class labour activists could have direct membership or take on specialist roles within trade unions was both consistent with international trade union practice and a rejection of the New Order's prescriptions for a separation of workers and labour intellectuals. What is less usual is the claim by a small number of NGO activists, including Surya Tjandra, Head of the Trade Union Rights Centre (TURC), who explicitly position their organisations in the labour movement, arguing that there exists a legitimate space for their services (Interview with TURC activists, 17 July 2006). The sustained involvement of research and policy NGOs, such as Akatiga and the Sedane Institute for Labour Information (Lembaga Informasi Perburuhan Sedane, LIPS), along with grassroots NGOs associated with the Christian churches and a range of second-generation legal and training NGOs, provides evidence for this claim. Perhaps most remarkably, in the mid-2000s the strongly Islamic Justice and Prosperity Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS) created the Indonesian Labour Foundation (ILF), an NGO run out of Jakarta with permanent staff in a number of large industrial cities, where they worked closely with major unions (Interview with ILF staff, 2 July 2007). The creation of this NGO suggests that party strategists believe that the NGO structure offers more scope to the party's campaign to influence trade unions than direct party intervention.

There would have been little chance for NGOs to reinvent themselves so successfully in this way if, as Vedi Hadiz (1997; 2001) has suggested, their role had been simply a product of the authoritarian context in which they emerged. NGOs' continuing and evolving engagement as labour movement institutions in a context where independent trade unions can register is thus highly significant as it suggests that there is indeed a place for non-union organisations in the labour movement in Indonesia.

Conclusion

The story of how the activists who established and ran Indonesia's labour NGOs related to workers and trade unions is simultaneously universal and particularly Indonesian. It is a cautionary tale about how an authoritarian state used its power to influence not only an industrial relations system but also the self-concept and ambitions of a nationally based oppositional labour movement. At the same time, it shows how profoundly the trajectory of Indonesia's labour relations has been shaped by international labour politics and international trade union practice.

Indonesia's labour NGO activists were part of a much broader community of human rights activists that emerged in opposition to Suharto's authoritarian rule. Products of a highly stratified society, these middle-class, non-worker outsiders behaved as classical labour intellectuals, seeking to bring knowledge and class consciousness to industrial workers and to alert the wider community to the plight of the first generation of Indonesians to flood into the factories. At the same time, however, NGO activists were deeply ambivalent about their involvement in the labour movement. On one hand, they believed they had a duty and the power to help otherwise powerless workers to challenge the New Order's punitive and repressive system of labour control. On the other hand, most of them saw no permanent place for non-worker intellectuals like themselves in an organised labour movement which they believed should rightly consist only of unions organised by, for and of workers.

NGO involvement in labour issues was also problematic in the eyes of the New Order state. There was little room for social activism within the New Order's exclusionary structures of social and political interest representation, particularly on an issue as politically and economically sensitive as labour. The regime and its supporters demonised labour intellectuals as meddling outsiders who had no place in a labour movement consisting of worker-only unions. While the government

was prepared to allow NGO activists to assist workers to become good citizens and even to provide constructive criticism on labour policy within the boundaries of its corporatist industrial relations system, NGOs were condemned outright when they became involved in labour organising or criticised the regime's one-union policy. In short, their interventions were rejected — along with those of the self-proclaimed alternative unions and radical student groups — when they stepped beyond the impartial moral leadership expected of the educated elite and assumed the function of a partisan labour intellectual.

In New Order Indonesia, the interests of labour were structurally subordinate to the interests of the developmentalist state. While the regime paid lip-service to the sectional interests of workers, official labour rhetoric left little space for even the socio-economic interests of workers to differ from those of employers, of other 'functional groups' or of society as a whole. The fact that the government left any space at all for worker interests to differ from the interests of the New Order state reflected both its attempts to maintain some level of international credibility and the ongoing influence of Revisionist principles on the New Order's understanding of the nature and functions of trade unions.

Like many other aspects of Pancasila Industrial Relations, Revisionism was not indigenous to Indonesia. Alongside Leninism, its tenets had been brought to the archipelago by Dutch labour intellectuals in the early twentieth century, fuelling debates between Indonesian Leninists and Revisionists that had raged for over half a century before Suharto came to power. When the armed forces crushed the Left in 1965, the moderate trade unionists who remained within the official trade union had little real power but they did influence the regime's rhetoric about trade unionism. Their efforts had international support because the same Revisionist principles underpinned the model of trade unionism that became dominant in the West after World War II and internationally after the end of the Cold War. Yet in contrast to the European form of Revisionism, in which trade unions had links to political parties but were not subordinate to them, in New Order Indonesia unions were expected to be entirely apolitical.

After the fall of Suharto in 1998, the balance shifted strongly towards more internationally recognisable forms of trade unionism as international labour bodies renewed their influence in Indonesia and began to shape Indonesian trade unions in their own image. Workers exercised their new freedom to organise, forming tens of thousands of

new trade unions across the nation and asserting themselves in workplaces and nationally in pursuit of workers' socio-economic interests. Some trade unionists even began to seek alliances with political parties when it became clear that their ability to achieve lasting change would be limited without recourse to formal politics.

Labour NGOs did not profit from this transformation of Indonesian labour relations. Non-union labour organisations were seen as having no place in the trade union-centred versions of the labour movement that were favoured internationally. Indeed, the position of labour NGOs in the Indonesian labour movement was significantly weakened when trade union registration requirements were liberalised under revised legislation. Many NGOs felt that they should step back once independent trade unionism had again became possible in Indonesia's reconfigured labour movement. Others, however, developed new kinds of relationships with the worker groups they had formerly sponsored and with other trade unions, in the process creating useful niches for themselves as advisors, trainers and advocates.

The labour NGOs that continued their engagement with labour issues in the decade after the New Order regime was dismantled may or may not survive in a way that approximates their current form or function. Yet even if they do not, their contribution to Indonesia's organised labour movement in the first decade after Reformasi — in particular their new-found legitimacy in the eyes of mainstream trade unions — raises wider questions about the approaches taken to the labour movement by practitioners and scholars. As argued in the Introduction, when scholars and unionists think about the institution of organised labour they almost invariably define trade unions as their object of knowledge, thereby failing to recognise the full extent of contemporary labour activism. The Indonesian case confirms that new understandings of the labour movement are necessary in order to properly document and theorise the contribution of labour NGOs and other non-traditional labour movement organisations to that movement.

NGOs have been excluded from consideration not by some immutable reality of the trade union movement but by a 'criteria of significance' based on the forms that the institutions of organised labour first assumed. This process ignored the structural characteristics of post-colonial societies, which differ greatly from those of Europe and Anglophone settler societies. In his discussion of the working class in India, Rajnarayan Chandavarkar notes that in post-colonial societies there has been:

> ... no steady evolution of 'peasants into proletarians', no inexorable process of de-skilling and no clear demarcation between factory labour and the casual poor. Industrial and political action on a massive scale often preceded trade union organization and did not necessarily sustain itself in rising class consciousness. The connections between industrial and non-industrial labour, migrant workers and their rural base, workplace and neighbourhood, gender and skill, caste and the division of labour, trade unions and informal associations suggested that the formation of the working class needed to be examined in its relationship with a wide range of social and political processes (Chandavarkar, 1997: 292).

As Terry Hull (1994: 2) states, the classic definitions of the working class that grew out of the European experience of the Industrial Revolution are thus only "roughly applicable to contemporary realities" in countries like Indonesia. Indeed, as Michael Pinches (1987: 117–18) observes about the Philippines, the ambiguities inherent in distinguishing between waged labour and self-employment in such settings demands a critical re-examination of the "conceptual distinctions frequently made in reference to the labour force in third world cities between the working class and the urban poor".

Theorists of organised labour have recognised the differences between Western and developing-country unionism (for example, Bates, 1970; Siddique, 1989). In fact, Clark Kerr and Abraham Siegel (1955) noted the difficulty in directly transferring Western labour movement theories not long after the idea of the 'developing country' was invented, observing that European and North American labour theories were not designed to consider the labour movements of non-capitalist, pre-industrialised societies or variants of capitalism beyond that found in the liberal West.[1] However, most scholars writing about organised labour in post-colonial states have ignored these insights, continuing to focus almost exclusively on trade unions as the globally accepted vehicle of organised labour. And in emphasising trade union density, state responses to trade unions, or the relationship between politics, industrialisation and industrial relations, they have left little room for the examination of aspects of developing-country labour movements that do not fit into the category 'union' (for example, Deyo, 1989; Frenkel and Peetz, 1998; Jomo and Todd, 1994; Kuruvilla and Erickson, 2002).

The conceptual divide between scholars of contemporary organised labour and those who study proletarianisation has close parallels

in the scholarly debates found in labour history.[2] Like contemporary accounts of developing-country labour movements, the old institutional approach to labour history:

> ... tended to be about trade unions (or occupations that could be unionised) and industrial relations, which often meant industrial conflict, and political parties either founded by trade unions or in some senses dependent upon them or upon the industrial working class that belonged to them (McKibbin, 1994: 34).

In the 1980s, labour historians who rejected this approach began writing a new form of labour history, arguing that traditional labour histories neglect "the way in which the workplace [is] imbricated in other sites of workers' lives and how issues of work spilled over into families, neighbourhoods and cities and vice versa" (Mohapatra, 1997: 11). As is also the case with studies of proletarianisation, the strengths of this new labour history derived from its being "a variety of history that, precisely because it was not primarily institutional history, could include the history of women, immigrants, and children alongside the history of adult working men" (Frader, 1995: 215).

Insights such as these have important implications for the study of labour institutions in developing countries, both historically and in the present, because they suggest — albeit obliquely — that there is room for a blurring of boundaries between European-style trade unions and other, less easily identified forms of labour movement organisation. However, like scholars of proletarianisation, proponents of the new labour history have largely abandoned the analytical study of trade unions in favour of the myriad of other institutions of which workers are part, ignoring the influence of unions on social relations (Chandavarkar, 1997). The debates within labour history are thus pertinent to efforts to recast our understanding of the contemporary labour movement in Indonesia and indeed elsewhere. Just as Jonathan Zeitlin (1987) and Howard Kimeldorf (1991) have urged labour historians to apply the insights of new labour history to the study of labour institutions, lessons learned from the study of the working classes of the Third World can be applied to organised labour. For as Brian Abbott reminds us, it is "misleading to concentrate exclusively on the traditional industrial relations actors", even in advanced capitalist societies (Abbott, 1998: 257).

This study has shown that the case for looking beyond traditional industrial relations actors is even stronger in emerging economies. In

countries such as Indonesia, it is precisely because of the differences between unions and new forms of collective labour activism that theoretical models of the organised labour movement must be reconsidered. Scholars like Vedi Hadiz acknowledge NGOs' involvement in labour issues. However, they have yet to recognise that NGOs may in some circumstances be labour movement organisations in their own right, instead trivialising them as a source of inspiration, an adjunct to unions, or a temporary substitute where unions are ineffective. This very lack of consensus about the significance, nature and purpose of NGOs' concern for labour confirms that much remains to be done to reach a fuller understanding of their role. And as the Indonesian case suggests, this is a task that demands a redrawing of the conceptual and organisational boundaries of the labour movement in order to accommodate organisations other than trade unions.

Glossary

AAFLI	Asian-American Free Labor Institute
ABM	Aliansi Buruh Menggugat (Workers' Demand Alliance)
ABP	Aliansi Buruh untuk Perubahan (Workers' Alliance for Change)
ABRJT	Aliansi Buruh dan dan Rakyat Jawa Timur (East Java Workers' and People's Alliance)
ACILS	American Center for International Labor Solidarity
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
AJI	Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (Independent Journalists' Alliance)
ANRI	Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (Indonesian National Archives)
APINDO	Asosiasi Pengusaha Indonesia (Indonesian Employers' Association)
Arek	Yayasan Arek Surabaya (Foundation for Labour Advocacy, Research and Education)
ASIET	Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor
ASPEK Indonesia	Asosiasi Serikat Pekerja Indonesia (Association of Indonesian Workers' Unions)
BBI	Barisan Buruh Indonesia (Indonesian Labour Front)
Bhakti Pertiwi	Yayasan Bhakti Pertiwi (Foundation for Service to the Nation)
BIN	Badan Intelijen Negara (National Intelligence Agency)
BKS-BUMIL	Badan Kerjasama–Buruh Militer (Labour-Military Cooperative Body)

CIMW	Centre for Indonesian Migrant Workers
DGB	Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (Confederation of German Trade Unions)
ELSAM	Lembaga Studi Advokasi Masyarakat (Institute for Policy and Advocacy)
FAKB	Forum Aspirasi Kaum Buruh (Forum for Workers' Aspirations)
FBLKB	Forum Buruh dan LSM untuk Keadilan Buruh (NGO and Worker Forum for Workers' Justice)
FBSI	Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia (All-Indonesia Labour Federation)
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Friedrich Ebert Foundation)
FKBC	Forum Komunikasi Buruh Cikarang (Cikarang Workers' Communication Forum)
FNPBI	Front Nasional Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia (National Front for Indonesian Workers' Struggle)
FNPIB	Front Nasional Pembebasan Irian Barat (National Front for the Liberation of West Irian)
FNV	Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging (Dutch Trade Union Federation)
FOKUBA	Federasi Organisasi Pekerja Keuangan dan Perbankan Indonesia (Federation of Indonesian Bank and Finance Workers' Organisations)
Forsol Buruh	Forum Solidaritas Untuk Buruh (Solidarity Forum for Workers)
FPB	Forum Paguyuban Buruh (Forum of Workers' Association)
FSP-BUMN	Federasi Serikat Pekerja BUMN (Federation of State-owned Enterprise Workers' Unions)
FSP-BUMN Strategis	Federasi Serikat Pekerja BUMN Strategis (Federation of Strategic State-owned Enterprise Workers' Unions)
FSP Kahutindo	Federasi Serikat Pekerja Kayu, Hutan dan Umum Seluruh Indonesia (Federation of All-Indonesian Wood, Forestry and General Workers' Unions)

FSPM	Federasi Serikat Pekerja Mandiri (Federation of Independent Workers' Unions)
FSPMI	Federasi Serikat Pekerja Metal Indonesia (Federation of Indonesian Metalworkers' Unions)
FSPSI	Federasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia (Federation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions)
FSPSI Reformasi	Federasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia Reformasi (Reformed Federation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions)
FSU	Forum Solidaritas Unionis (Unionists' Solidarity Forum)
G30S/PKI	Gerakan 30 September/Partai Komunis Indonesia (30 September Movement/Indonesian Communist Party)
GASBI	Gabungan Serikat Buruh Indonesia (Federation of Indonesian Labour Unions)
GASBIINDO	Gabungan Sarekat Buruh Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Association of Muslim Unions)
Gaspermindo	Gabungan Serikat Pekerja Merdeka Indonesia (Amalgamated Indonesian Free Trade Unions)
Golkar	Golongan Karya (Functional Groups)
GSBI	Gabungan Serikat Buruh Independen (Federation of Independent Trade Unions)
GSBM	Gabungan Serikat Buruh Mandiri (Association of Independent Labour Unions)
GSBV	Gabungan Serikat Buruh Vertikal (Federation of Vertical Unions)
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
GUF	Global Union Federation
HIVOS	Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (Humanistic Institution for Co-operation with Developing Countries)
Humanika	Kelompok Kerja Humanika (Humanika Working Group)
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions
ILF	Indonesian Labour Foundation
ILO	International Labour Organisation

IMF	International Monetary Fund
INFID	International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development
IPJ	Institut Perburuhan Jakarta (Jakarta Labour Institute)
ISDV	Indische Sociaal Democratische Vereeniging (Indies Social Democratic Association)
ISJ	Institut Sosial Jakarta (Jakarta Social Institute)
IUF	International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations
Jamsostek	Jaminan Sosial Asuransi Tenaga Kerja (Employee Social Security and Insurance Guarantee)
KAB	Komunitas Advokasi Buruh (Labour Advocacy Community)
KAPB	Komite Anti Penindasan Buruh (Committee Against the Oppression of Workers)
KASBI	Kongres Aliansi Serikat Buruh Indonesia (Congress of Indonesian Unions' Alliance, formerly Committee of Independent Unions' Action)
KASBUL	Kaderisasi Sebulan (Catholic Monthly Caderisation)
KASM	Komite Aksi Satu Mei (Committee for Action on 1 May)
KBB	Kelompok Buruh Bandung (Bandung Workers' Group)
KBKI	Kesatuan Buruh Kerakyatan Indonesia (Indonesian People's Labour Union)
KBSI	Kongres Buruh Seluruh Indonesia (All-Indonesia Workers' Congress)
KBSI	Konfederasi Serikat Buruh Indonesia (Indonesian Confederation of Trade Unions)
Kespekri	Kesatuan Pekerja Kristen Republik Indonesia (Union of Christian Workers of the Republic of Indonesia)
KOBAR	Komite Buruh untuk Aksi Reformasi (Workers' Committee for Reform Action)
KORPRI	Korps Pegawai Republik Indonesia (Civil Servants' Corps of the Republic of Indonesia)

KOSGORO	Kesatuan Organisasi Serbaguna Gotong Royong (Association of Organisations Concerned with Mutual Assistance)
KPD	Kelompok Peduli Diri (Concerned Workers' Group)
KPHP	Komisi Pembaharuan Hukum Perburuhan (Commission for the Renewal of Labour Law)
KPS	Yayasan Kelompok Pelita Sejahtera (Welfare Light Group)
KSBSI	Konfederasi Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (Confederation of Indonesian Prosperous Trade Unions)
KSPI	Kongres Serikat Pekerja Indonesia (Congress of Indonesian Trade Unions)
KSPSI	Konfederasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia (Confederation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions)
KSTS	Komite Solidaritas Untuk Titi Sugiati (Solidarity Committee for Titi Sugiati)
KSUM	Komite Solidaritas Untuk Marsinah (Solidarity Committee for Marsinah)
Lapera	Yayasan Lapera Indonesia (Lapera Foundation)
LBH	Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (Legal Aid Institute)
LBH APIK	Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan (Legal Aid Bureau of the Indonesian Women's Association for Justice)
LDD	Lembaga Daya Dharma Keuskupan Agung Jakarta (Outreach Institute of the Jakarta Archdiocese)
LEC	Labour Education Centre
LIPS	Lembaga Informasi Perburuhan Sedane (Sedane Institute for Labour Information)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPRS	Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Sementara (Transitional People's Consultative Assembly)
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Association
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NKK	Normalisasi Kehidupan Kampu (Campus Life Normalisation)
NOVIB	Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand (Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation)

PAN	Partai Amanat Nasional (National Mandate Party)
Papernas	Partai Persatuan Pembebasan Nasional (National Liberation Party of Unity)
PBI	Partai Buruh Indonesia (Indonesian Labour Party)
PBJ	Pelayanan Buruh Jakarta (Jakarta Workers' Service)
PBJ	Perkumpulan Buruh Jabotabek (Jabotabek Workers' Association)
PBKA	Persatuan Buruh Kereta Api (Railway Workers' Union)
PBN	Partai Buruh Nasional (National Labour Party)
PBSD	Partai Buruh Sosial Demokrat (Social Democratic Labour Party)
PDI	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (Indonesian Democratic Party)
PDI-P	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle)
PGI	Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia (Indonesian Communion of Churches)
PGRI	Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia (Indonesian Teachers' Association)
PKB	Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (National Awakening Party)
PKH	Perserikatan Komunis di Hindia (Communist Union of the Indies)
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
PKPI	Partai Kongres Pekerja Indonesia (Indonesian Workers' Congress Party)
PKS	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party)
PLN	Perusahaan Listrik Negara (State Electricity Company)
PMK	Pelayanan Masyarakat Kota Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (Urban Community Mission of the Batak Protestant Christian Assembly)
PNI	Partai Nasionalis Indonesia (Indonesian Nationalist Party)
PPBI	Pusat Perjuangan Buruh Indonesia (Indonesian Centre for Labour Struggle)
PPI	Partai Pekerja Indonesia (Indonesian Workers' Party)

PPK	Paguyuban Pekerja Katolik (Association of Catholic Workers)
PPKB	Persatuan Pergerakan Kaum Buruh (Union of Workers' Movements)
PPMI	Persaudaraan Pekerja Muslimin Indonesia (Brotherhood of Muslim Workers)
PPMI '98	Persaudaraan Pekerja Muslimin Indonesia '98 (Brotherhood of Muslim Workers '98)
PPN	Partai Pekerja Nasional (National Workers' Party)
PPP	Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party)
PPPI	Partai Pengusaha dan Pekerja Indonesia (Party of Indonesian Businesspeople and Workers)
PPPP	Partai Perjuangan Pekerja dan Pelajar (Workers' and Students' Party of Struggle)
PPOR	Partai Persatuan Oposisi Rakyat (People's United Opposition Party)
PRD	Partai Rakyat Demokratik (Democratic People's Party)
PRRI	Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia)
PSI	Partai Sosialis Indonesia (Indonesian Socialist Party)
PSP	Partai Solidaritas Pekerja (Workers' Solidarity Party)
PSPSI	Partai Solidaritas Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia (All-Indonesia Workers' Solidarity Party)
PTKI	Partai Tenaga Kerja Indonesia (Indonesian Labour Force Party)
Sarbumusi	Sarekat Buruh Muslimin Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Workers' Union)
SBII	Serikat Buruh Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Labour Union)
SBJ	Serikat Buruh Jabotabek (Greater Jakarta Labour Union)
SBK	Serikat Buruh Kerakyatan (People's Labour Union)
SBM-SK	Serikat Buruh Merdeka-Setia Kawan (Solidarity Free Trade Union)

SBMI	Serikat Buruh Medan Independen (Medan Independent Labour Union)
SBPI	Sarekat Buruh Pertjetakan Indonesia (Indonesian Printers' Union)
SBR	Serikat Buruh Regional (Regional Labour Union)
SBSI	Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (Indonesian Prosperous Trade Union)
SDAP	Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij (Social-Democratic Workers' Party)
SDI	Sarekat Dagang Islam (Islamic Traders' Association)
Sekber Golkar	Sekretariat Bersama Organisasi-Organisasi Golongan Karya Anggota Front Nasional (Joint Secretariat of the Functional Group Organisations of the National Front)
SerBuk	Serikat Buruh Kebun (Indonesian Plantation Workers' Union)
SGBI	Sindikasi Gerakan Buruh Indonesia (Indonesian Labour Movement Syndicate)
SI	Sarekat Islam (Islamic Association)
Sisbikum	Saluran Informasi Sosial dan Bimbingan Hukum (Channel for Social Information and Legal Guidance)
SMID	Solidaritas Mahasiswa Indonesia untuk Demokrasi (Indonesian Students in Solidarity for Democracy)
SOB Pantjasila	Sentral Organisasi Buruh Pantjasila (Federation of Pancasila Workers' Organisations)
SOBRI	Sentral Organisasi Buruh Republik Indonesia (Central Organisation of Indonesian Workers)
SOBSI	Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia (Central Organisation of Indonesian Trade Unions)
SOKSI	Sentral Organisasi Karyawan Sosialis Indonesia (Central Organisation of Indonesian Socialist Workers)
SP-KEP	Serikat Pekerja-Kimia, Energi dan Pertambangan (Chemical, Energy and Mineworkers' Union)
SP-LEM	Serikat Pekerja Logam, Elektronik dan Mesin (Metal, Electronic and Machinery Workers' Union)
SPN	Serikat Pekerja Nasional (National Workers' Union)

SP PT PLN	Serikat Pekerja PT PLN (State Electricity Company Workers' Union)
SPSI	Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia (All-Indonesia Workers' Union)
TMII	Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park)
TURC	Trade Union Rights Centre
UNI	Union Network International
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSTP	Vereeniging van Spoor-en Tram Personeel (Railway and Tram Workers' Union)
WCL	World Confederation of Labour
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WWF	Waterside Workers' Federation [Australia]
YAKOM	Yayasan Komunikasi (Communication Foundation)
YAKOMA	Yayasan Komunikasi Masyarakat (Social Communication Foundation)
Yasanti	Yayasan Annisa Swasti (Independent Women's Foundation)
YBK	Yayasan Bina Karya (Work Guidance Foundation)
YBM	Yayasan Buruh Membangun (Foundation for Labour Movement)
YFAS	Yayasan Forum Adil Sejahtera (Justice and Welfare Forum)
YLBHI	Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia (Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation)
YMB	Yayasan Maju Bersama (Foundation for Mutual Progress)
YPM	Yayasan Perempuan Mardika (Free Women Foundation)

Notes

Introduction

1 The New Order (Orde Baru) is the name given to the military-backed regime that seized power in 1965–67 in Indonesia. It collapsed when President Suharto resigned on 21 May 1998. Vice-President B.J. Habibie then served as president until October 1999. Abdurrahman Wahid succeeded him when he was appointed to the presidency as a result of parliamentary negotiations after the June 1999 General Election. At the end of July 2001, Wahid was in turn replaced by Megawati Sukarnoputri, who served as President until Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was elected in September 2004.

2 Reformasi is the name given to the period and process of political and social renewal that followed the resignation of President Suharto.

3 See also the special edition edited by Deborah Eade on NGO-union collaboration in *Development and Practice* (2004).

4 Some NGOs have come under criticism for working too closely with companies on monitoring and reporting. For example, the US-based Global Alliance was funded by Nike to do a series of reports on working conditions in Nike factories in Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia in 2000 and 2001 (Global Alliance, 2002; Yunya Yimprasert, 2000).

5 As Fowler (1992) has shown, international NGO funding networks are extremely complex. The importance of funding from the governments of industrialised countries to NGOs based in both industrialised and developing countries has been well canvassed in the international NGO literature.

6 Broader definitions are used in some contexts, including the Philippines, but most exclude trade unions. For example, Clarke (1998) defines NGOs as "*private, non-profit, professional organizations with a distinctive legal character, concerned with public welfare goal* [italics in the original]". In this category, he includes "philanthropic foundations, church development agencies, academic think-tanks, human rights organizations and other organizations focusing on issues such as gender, health, agricultural development, social welfare, the environment and indigenous people". In addition to "private hospitals and schools, religious groups, sports clubs and ... quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations", this definition

excludes "people's organizations" (non-profit membership-based associations, including trade unions).

7 In practice this is not always the case because the low wages of workers in developing countries mean that financial assistance from abroad remains important for trade unions. For a discussion of how outside funding affects NGO and trade union accountability, see Ford (2006b).

8 The principles of Pancasila, loosely translated, are: belief in Almighty God; respect for humanity; Indonesian unity; democracy guided by the principle of deliberation to reach a consensus; and the realisation of social justice. As their names suggest, both Pancasila Democracy and Pancasila Industrial Relations were said to be based on the Pancasila philosophy.

9 For a detailed analysis of Pancasila Industrial Relations, see Ford (1999), Ford (2000a).

10 Bob Hadiwinata (2003: 93–6) provides a more detailed overview of legislative and regulatory attempts to control NGOs.

11 See also Bill Frederick's notes on the use of *kaum terpelajar* and the importance of Western education (Frederick 1988: 36).

12 By ethnography, I mean "the focused attention to detail and process by assimilating the point of view of participants" (Burawoy, 2001: 148). Marsden's realist reading of Foucault influenced my decision to combine the methodologies of history and ethnography (Marsden, 1993). Foucault advocated the writing of a history that seeks to understand contemporary practices by exposing the processes through which they came into being, a 'diagnosis' of the present, rather than an explanation of how that present emerged from the past (Foucault, 1970; 1973; 1977). Following Bell (1994: 11), I argue that while such a history of the present seeks out and examines "ruptures, breaks, gaps, displacements, interruptions, thresholds and shifts", these breaks are never complete because "within the discontinuity there is 'overlapping, interaction, and echoes' of what came before".

Chapter 1

1 Trade union and other labour histories written in Indonesia in later years used this same periodisation. However, their interpretation of the events of these periods was unashamedly coloured by their authors' ideological positions and political agendas. For a detailed historiographical analysis of 16 Indonesian-authored texts along with works by Ingleson and Hawkins, see Ford (2003b: 345–61). For a retelling of the contents of two histories written in the Sukarno years and two histories written in the first few years of the New Order, see Ford (2003b: 362–82).

2 On 8 September 1917 the moderate wing of the ISDV split from the organisation to form the Social-Democratic Workers' Party (Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij, SDAP) (McVey, 1965: 27–8). The ISDV

then changed its name first to the Communist Union of the Indies (Perserikatan Komunis di Hindia, PKH) in 1920 and then to the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) in 1924. For an extended discussion of these organisations, see Takashi Shiraishi (1990).

3 The policy was effectively ended in the 1930s as attitudes hardened towards the nationalist movement (Cribb, 1992: 148–9).

4 For accounts of the relationships between Indonesian unionists and labour intellectuals and groups outside Indonesia, see Sandra (1961). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) was also active from the late colonial period. The ILO director Harold Butler had visited Indonesia in October 1937, while Hindromartono, who sat on the executives of several unions, was later sent to the ILO (Anderson, 1972: 422).

5 By 1953, the industrial workforce had grown to around four million people, with a further 2.1 million people employed in transportation, commerce and government (Hawkins, 1963b: 250). Although membership records were kept more rigorously in the early decades of Independence than in the Suharto and post-Suharto periods, Indonesian statistics should be read as indicative rather than authoritative. For example, Hawkins reports that at the end of 1957, when SOBSI claimed over 2.7 million members, regional labour offices reported that SOBSI had fewer than half that number (Hawkins, 1963b: 260).

6 SOKSI was later broadened into a coordinating body for several mass organisations. For SOKSI's own account of its connections to the military and to Golkar, see Sjamsuddin (1990: 21–8). For a full account of Golkar, including SOKSI's relationship to it, see Reeve (1985).

7 The circumstances surrounding the coup and the mass killings that followed are still a matter for fierce scholarly and public debate. For a summary of major explanations offered for the coup, see Cribb (2002).

8 For a detailed account of the sources of Moertopo's corporatist ideas, see Bourchier (1996) and Reeve (1985).

9 For a summary of this period and an account of the establishment and transformation of FBSI, see Hadiz (1997).

10 By all accounts, Batubara's commitment to Social-Democratic unionism was genuine. He has maintained a strong interest in labour affairs and since attempted to establish an industrial relations program at the University of Indonesia.

11 Tripartitism is the basic tenet of the ILO's preferred model of industrial relations. It is also a feature of corporatist systems of industrial relations more generally. In the language of industrial relations, 'tripartite' refers to employers, workers/unions and the state. Similarly, bipartite (two parties) refers to employers and workers or their unions. Pancasila Industrial Relations incorporate both bipartite mechanisms (including communications forums and collective labour agreements) and tripartite dispute

resolution committees and other mechanisms at both local and central levels. For a detailed description of these mechanisms, see Ford (1999).

Chapter 2

1 For a detailed explication of the influence of Leninism on Indonesia's early trade unions, see Tedjasukmana (1958: 63–84) and Hindley (1966: 132–56).

2 After the fall of Suharto, there was renewed emphasis on the publication of texts about Socialism. Texts available in bookshops in Indonesia at the end of 2001 included Fromm (2001), Kardelj (2001), Luxemburg (2000), Magnis-Suseno (2001) and Soedjatmoko (2001).

3 For a detailed discussion of the parties' positions, see Ford (2003b: 123–46).

4 I obtained a copy of this typescript from the private archives of Koeswari, a former member of the PSI and General Secretary of KBSI. Koeswari was a signatory to the 1974 Seminar Declaration under which Pancasila Labour Relations was established.

5 My thanks to Jan Elliott for this information.

6 For a retrospective view on SOKSI's use of Socialist language, see Sjamsuddin (1990: 25).

7 For a fuller explication of the principles of Pancasila Industrial Relations, see Ford (1995).

8 These issues were widely covered in the national press in 1994 and 1995. Official statements on companies' shortcomings were also frequent in the final years of the Suharto era.

9 For an explanation of the etymology of *buruh* and *karyawan*, see Leclerc (1972).

10 Imam Soedarwo had a background in KOSGORO, whilst Bomer Pasaribu came from SOKSI. Bomer Pasaribu was Secretary-General of SPSI from 1990 to 1995 and General Chair from 1996 to 1997. He was also Deputy Secretary-General of Golkar and briefly Minister for Manpower under President Wahid. Bhoka's actions in the immediate post-Suharto period, when he formed the Indonesian Workers' Party, proved conclusively that his opposition was to Golkar rather than to labourist politics.

Chapter 3

1 For extended interviews with Dita Sari and a detailed description of the activities of FNPBI, see La Botz (2001: 229–51).

2 These accusations were common also in articles published in the mid-1990s.

3 Discussion of issues concerning ethnicity, religion, race and class, known in Indonesian by the acronym SARA (*suku, agama, ras, antar-golongan*) were proscribed during the New Order.

4 G30S/PKI is the Indonesian acronym for the attempted coup of 30 September 1965.

5 Liberalism was also sometimes invoked in criticisms of outside involvement in the labour movement. Latief, for example, was quoted as saying in 1993 that "it should be admitted that a small group of workers and certain people in society have been influenced by liberal ways in fighting for their interests" (*Jakarta Post,* 25 September 1993).

Chapter 4

1 For authors writing from an NGO perspective, organisational form (most notably membership criteria) was the primary consideration in determining the relative similarities and differences between alternative unions and labour NGOs. Eldridge, Riker, Uhlin and Aspinall have all contrasted the alternative unions — primarily the Solidarity Free Trade Union (Serikat Buruh Merdeka-Setia Kawan, SBM-SK) and Indonesian Prosperous Trade Union (Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia, SBSI) — with labour NGOs (Aspinall, 2005; Eldridge, 1995: 111–14; Riker, 1998: 313–14; Uhlin, 1997: 119). Sinaga did not address the question of the alternative unions, which suggests that he believed that organisations such as SBM-SK and SBSI were outside the scope of his study (Sinaga, 1994).

2 Hadiz identifies three clusters of "labour-based NGOs", in which he includes the alternative unions and grassroots labour NGOs of the late New Order period (Hadiz, 1997). He argues that under the New Order, labour NGOs with "corporatist reformist" tendencies broadly accepted the stated ideals of Pancasila Industrial Relations but were critical of its practical shortcomings, seeking to provide "essential services" to workers in the hope that SPSI could eventually be reformed from within. In practice, these NGOs had much in common with what Hadiz describes as the "liberal and social democratic reformists", a category that includes SBM-SK and SBSI along with many grassroots labour NGOs characterised by their commitment to international human rights and to "the example of contemporary Western trade unionism, which promoted a separation of political from purely trade unionist objectives". Hadiz' final cluster consists of radical labour-based organisations, including the Indonesian Centre for Labour Struggle (Pusat Perjuanganan Buruh Indonesia, PPBI), whose "middle-class agents" sought to facilitate consciousness-raising among workers "to enable them to take up their historical role" (Hadiz, 1997: 153–5).

3 Unlike Hadiz, Kusyuniati distinguished between SBM-SK and SBSI, which she equated with NGOs, and PPBI, which she called a "student model".

4 Hadiz has not always conflated these categories. In a paper written in 1993, he distinguished between what he called the "trade unionist" path and "NGO" path of alternative labour organising (Hadiz, 1993: 194–7).

5 The only NGO activist who made a statement to the contrary argued that SBSI was not a worker organisation. However, this was a criticism of SBSI rather than a considered statement on the difference between unions and labour NGOs. In other parts of the interview, this activist emphasised the differences between labour NGOs and unions.

6 Abdullah distinguishes grassroots NGOs that approach worker education from a "technocratic" perspective from structurally oriented labour NGOs, dividing the latter according to their focus on either micro- or macro-level issues (Interview with Fauzi Abdullah, 28 March 1999). A list of 16 labour NGOs active in Java was included in this report, all of which were grassroots or legal aid NGOs. The majority of these organisations were included in the 25 organisations surveyed for this study (see below).

7 For details of other international labour networks with links to Indonesia's labour NGOs, see Rachmawati (1996).

8 For examples of the diffusion of foreign influence, see Uhlin (1997: 240–1).

9 Although KSUM was dissolved in 1995, Marsinah's murder remained by far the most intensively reported labour issue for the remainder of the 1990s. For a discussion of the impact of Marsinah's activism and death on Indonesian popular culture, see Ford (2003a).

10 No reliable data exists on the total number of labour NGOs. However, according to Sakai (2002: 167), by 1999 some 58 labour NGOs were active.

11 Except where otherwise noted, the information given in this section was provided in interviews with representatives of the NGO concerned. Where organisations had standard English versions of their names, those versions are used even when they are not a literal translation of their Indonesian name.

12 Fieldwork was conducted between January 1999 and December 2007. NGO and worker activists were formally interviewed once but many were consulted again several times through the period of transition after the fall of Suharto in order to monitor and record changes in perceptions of their position in the labour movement. Interviews were supplemented by factory visits and observer-participation in worker and activist training sessions and in strike meetings. Most formal interviews were conducted during fieldwork in January–March 1999, January–April 2000 and June–July 2001. Informal follow-up interviews and participant observation

in union and NGO activities were conducted in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. Citations from interviews are coded to protect the anonymity of the interviewees.

13 This translation is an institutional rather than a literal one. A labour NGO called Yayasan Prakarsa operated in a similar manner in Yogyakarta. For details, see Rachmawati (1996: 91–4).

14 Athreya (1998: 117–18) reported that PMK training sessions contained "overtly political" content in 1995 when she was doing her fieldwork but "at no time did the speakers suggest that participants organize and strike, or provide any concrete guidance for doing so". When I attended similar training sessions in 2000, strikes were high on the agenda.

15 For an account of workers' theatre in Indonesia, see Bodden (1997).

16 For an overview of the approach and activities of YLBHI to 1995, see Harman (1995). YLBHI has published a number of internal histories of the organisation (see, for example, *Laporan Perkembangan Keorganisasian Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (LBH)*, 1993; *Legal Aid in Indonesia (Five Years of the Lembaga Bantuan Hukum)*, 1976; Nusantara, 1988; Sunggono and Harianto, 1994). For a detailed scholarly account of YLBHI, see Aspinall (2005).

17 For a critique of YLBHI's approach to labour from the Indonesian Centre for Labour Struggle, see Wilson (1995).

18 Munir was murdered on a Garuda Indonesia flight in 2004 allegedly by operatives of Indonesia's National Intelligence Agency (Badan Intelijen Negara, BIN). In what is in many ways parallel to the way in which Marsinah became a national symbol of suffering and oppression, Munir was elevated after his untimely death from his already very significant status as head of the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (Komisi untuk Orang Hilang dan Korban Tindak Kekerasan) and the human rights group Imparsial to that of a national icon for civil society groups and activists.

Chapter 5

1 Other worker activists confirmed that this was a widely held view (Worker Interview AA, 31 January 2000; Worker Interview AD, 30 June 2001; Worker Interview AH, 13 February 2000; Worker Interview AP, 29 February 2000; Worker Interview AQ, 29 February 2000).

2 This observation was made by several activists (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000; NGO Interview AN, 12 January 2000; NGO Interview AO, 31 January 2000; NGO Interview AS, 19 March 1999; NGO Interview AV, 29 March 1999; NGO Interview BK, 7 March 2000).

3 Several activists made direct observations on the questions of voice and empowerment (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000; NGO Interview AH,

26 February 2000; NGO Interview AI, 11 March 1999; NGO Interview BK, 7 March 2000).

4 Many activists commented on this (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000; NGO Interview AK, 29 March 1999; NGO Interview AL, 8 March 2000; NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000; NGO Interview AQ, 23 February 2000; NGO Interview AT, 24 February 2000; NGO Interview AZ, 24 March 1999).

5 The PRD was not always consistent in its understanding of the role of the revolutionary party and unions. For example, a PRD statement that demonstrated the party's occasional confusion between revolutionary and labourist politics appeared in an article entitled "Laborers Need a Political Party to Fight: PRD" (*Jakarta Post*, 6 May 2002).

6 Several other NGO activists and worker-activists also took this position (NGO Interview AK, 29 March 1999; NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000; NGO Interview BB, 29 March 1999; NGO Interview BO, 30 November 2002; Worker Interview AB, 14 February 2000; Worker Interview AS, 24 January 2000).

7 Similar comments were made by other activists (NGO Interview AG, 25 February 2000; NGO Interview AJ, 23 March 1999; NGO Interview AM, 12 March 1999; NGO Interview AZ, 24 March 1999). At times, interviewees made comments like these about activists' own organisations: more often they implied criticism of the efforts of other labour NGOs.

8 Although NGOs strongly denied that their own organisation had a patron-client relationship with workers, they both acknowledged that a perception exists that labour NGOs generally had such a relationship and were quick to name NGOs which they believed did (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000; NGO Interview AB, 14 February 2000; NGO Interview AG, 25 February 2000; NGO Interview AO, 31 January 2000; NGO Interview AV, 29 March 1999; NGO Interview BB, 29 March 1999).

9 This view was explicitly expressed by many NGO activists as well as activists from the FNPBI (Interview with FNPBI activists, 7 March 2000; NGO Interview AC, 21 March 1999; NGO Interview AE, 21 February 2000; NGO Interview BA, 3 March 2000; NGO Interview BB, 29 March 1999; NGO Interview BL, 7 March 2000; NGO Interview BN, 31 March 1999; NGO Interview BP, 29 November 2002; NGO Interview BR, 12 December 2002; NGO Interview BS, 12 December 2002).

10 The term 'ethical intellectual' is drawn from the work of Perlman (1928).

11 However, note La Botz' observation that in his interviews with PRD leaders he was "struck by the fact that they remained in many ways a student group that has yet to come to grips with its relationships to workers, unions, and the working class" (La Botz, 2001: 336).

12 This opinion was expressed by many on both sides of the debate (Interview with FNPBI activists, 7 March 2000; Interview with PRD activist, 23

August 1999; NGO Interview AC, 21 March 1999; NGO Interview AG, 25 February 2000; NGO Interview AH, 26 February 2000; NGO Interview AI, 11 March 1999; NGO Interview AJ, 23 March 1999; Worker Interview AL, 20 March 1999).

13 Note that SBSI relied very heavily on outside funding throughout the 1990s and into the Reformasi era and that FNPBI accepted funding from the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) in the early post-crisis period.

14 A number of other activists made similar observations (NGO Interview AO, 31 January 2000; NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000; NGO Interview AU, 4 January 2000; NGO Interview BB, 29 March 1999).

15 Similar comments were made by other activists, most of whom fell on the left of the ideological spectrum (NGO Interview AG, 25 February 2000; NGO Interview AI, 11 March 1999; NGO Interview AJ, 23 March 1999; NGO Interview AY, 5 December 2001).

16 Other NGO activist also made this observation (NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000; NGO Interview AO, 31 January 2000).

17 Tarmono used the English-based term *intelektual* rather than indigenous term *cendekiawan*.

18 This was not always the case. In an extended discussion of this question, one activist commented, "Who says you can't prosper from working at an NGO? Look at Adnan Buyung and Teten Masduki. Some work because they have a calling, but others see the opportunity to become famous" (NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000).

19 The overwhelming majority of interviewees expressed this sentiment in some way (for example, NGO Interview AO, 31 January 2000; NGO Interview AQ, 23 February 2000; NGO Interview AA, 3 March 2000; NGO Interview AE, 21 February 2000; NGO Interview AH, 26 February 2000; NGO Interview AJ, 23 March 1999; NGO Interview AK, 29 March 1999; NGO Interview AM, 12 March 1999; NGO Interview AN, 12 January 2000; NGO Interview AP, 22 February 2000; NGO Interview AS, 19 March 1999; NGO Interview AZ, 24 March 1999; NGO Interview BA, 3 March 2000; NGO Interview BB, 29 March 1999; NGO Interview BF, 14 March 2000; NGO Interview BP, 29 November 2002).

20 A number of other NGO activists made similar observations (NGO Interview AM, 12 March 1999; NGO Interview AO, 31 January 2000; NGO Interview BB, 29 March 1999; NGO Interview BF, 14 March 2000).

Chapter 6

1 Similar comments were made by other NGO activists (NGO Interview AL, 8 March 2000; NGO Interview AO, 31 January 2000; NGO Interview AT, 24 February 2000). For an anthropological account of the 'push factors'

encouraging young women to seek employment in the cities, see Athreya (1998).

2 The Central Organisation of Indonesian Trade Unions (Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, SOBSI) was the major Communist union of the Independence period. See Chapters One and Two for details.

3 For participant-centred accounts of particular strikes and other factory campaigns, see Andriyani (1996a: 104–36), Athreya (1998: 92–148) and Berman (1998: Chapter 5).

4 For personal histories of a number of labour NGO activists, see La Botz (2001: 1–28).

5 See the detailed account of one worker's interaction with a labour NGO in Athreya (1998: 113–18).

6 This activist also had very strong opinions about NGOs' shortcomings.

Chapter 7

1 On 2 July 1997, when the Thai baht collapsed, the cash exchange rate was Rp.2532 to the US dollar. It passed the Rp.10,000 mark on 20 January 1998 and reached Rp.15,552 three days later. The exchange rate remained around that level for over six months, reaching an all-time low of Rp.16,224 on 25 June of that year. It first dropped below Rp.10,000 again in October 1998 and ranged between approximately Rp.7,000 and Rp.11,000 for the remainder of the decade (calculations based on currency data available at http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic).

2 For early accounts of the events leading to the fall of Suharto, see Forrester (1998) and Schwarz (1999: 337–66). For general overviews of the economic effects of the crisis see Booth (2000) and Hill (1999).

3 For a critical reading of post-Suharto politics, see Robison (2004).

4 Under Law No. 22/1999 on Regional Autonomy, from 2001 minimum wage determination and a range of other industrial relations functions were devolved to local government. This devolution extended even to data collection on matters such as the number of enterprises with a collective labour agreement in place and the number of days lost to industrial action.

5 Business and government criticised unions for harming the investment climate. These accusations were tendentious in light of the impact of other factors such as continuing demands for under-the-table payments and Indonesia's uncertain security environment (Ford, 2004a).

6 President Wahid appointed three cabinets during the 21 months of his presidency. Habibie's Minister for Manpower, Fahmi Idris, a businessman and long-time member of Golkar, was replaced by Chair of the Federation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, FSPSI), Bomer Pasaribu, as Minister for Manpower in the first

Cabinet. Pasaribu was, in turn, was replaced by a temporary Minister of Manpower, the environmental and consumer activist Erna Witoelar some months before the second Cabinet was announced in August 2000. In Wahid's second Cabinet, Manpower and Transmigration were recombined and the former Minister of Transmigration and Population, Alhilal Hamdi, became Minister of Manpower and Transmigration. When a third Cabinet reshuffle took place on 1 June 2001, less than two months before Wahid was forced to step down, Hamdi retained the Manpower and Transmigration portfolio. In Megawati's Cabinet, appointed on 9 August 2001, Hamdi was replaced by Jacob Nuwa Wea, Chair of the Confederation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions (Konfederasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, KSPSI) and a member of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, PDI-P). Like Pasaribu before him, Nuwa Wea retained his position in FSPSI after becoming Minister. Fahmi Idris then again served as Minister for Manpower in Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's first Cabinet, which came to office on 21 October 2004, but was replaced in his second Cabinet by Erman Suparno from Wahid's National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, PKB).

7 The text of these laws are available at http://www.nakertrans.go.id/perundangan/index.php. For an ILO perspective on the drafts of the laws, see Boulton (2001). For an independent analysis and a discussion of the role played by trade unions in the tripartite drafting process, see Caraway (2006a; 2006b).

8 Criticisms of the trade union bill were widely covered in the press in February and March 2000.

9 For a detailed legal perspective on Law No. 2/2004, see Arnold (2008: 553–6).

10 For a detailed description of the official disputes resolution process under the New Order, see Ford (1995).

11 For a discussion of the implications of these regulations, see SMERU (2002: 17–21).

12 As noted above, the separate law on public sector unions had yet to be drafted as of early 2009.

13 The Department of Manpower figures included verified memberships of 1,657,244 for KSPSI, 793,874 for KSPI and 227,806 for KSBSI. In 2003, self-verified membership of the three confederations totalled almost 8 million. Membership numbers are at best soft because most members do not pay dues. However, the 2005 verified statistics are also problematic because some unions boycotted the verification exercise.

14 The remainder of working Indonesians are engaged in 'independent economic activity' or in family businesses. The service sector, which provides employment opportunities for the majority of these 'independent' or family workers, is primarily informal. In total, more than 50 per cent

of women and around 43 per cent of men were employed in informal sector occupations in the late 1990s (Feridhanusetyawan, 2000).

15 The Federation of All-Indonesian Wood, Forestry and General Workers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Kayu, Hutan dan Umum Seluruh Indonesia, FSP Kahutindo) has also introduced a more centralised funding structure in recent years (Personal Communication with Teri Caraway, 23 January 2009).

16 KSBSI's verified membership in the same year was 227,806. The discrepancy is explained by poor record-keeping practices and a tendency to overestimate its membership (characteristics shared by most Indonesian unions). A local official told me in 2007 that new members' names were recorded but ex-members were never struck off membership rolls.

17 In fieldwork interviews, worker-activists often referred to FNPBI either as a student group or an NGO. For an outline of FNPBI's approach, see Kusnadi (2002).

18 Although FSPM is not strictly an NGO-sponsored union, IUF's local office is headed by Hemasari, formerly of the Bandung Legal Aid Institute (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Bandung, LBH Bandung).

19 Some labour NGOs and unionists were highly critical of this forum, which they felt ACILS had imposed from above without consulting key stakeholders.

20 One important exception to this generalisation is GSBI, whose leaders pride themselves on being self-sufficient but have also succeeded in gaining access to funding directly from organisations like the international development NGO, Oxfam (Interview with GSBI activist, 16 December 2006).

21 The discussion that follows draws in part on the findings of a joint research project with Surya Tjandra carried out in 2007 with the support of the Australia-Indonesia Governance Research Partnership.

22 In interviews conducted in 2007 in Batam, Surabaya and Medan, members of KSBSI, as well as other unions, also identified this as a barrier to wider support.

Chapter 8

1 The All-Indonesia Workers' Union (Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, SPSI), later known as the Federation of All-Indonesia Workers' Unions (Federasi Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia, FSPSI) was the officially sanctioned union of the Suharto period. The three political parties mentioned here are the leftist People's Democratic Party (Partai Rakyat Demokratik, PRD), the Islamic National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, PKB), the party most closely associated with Indonesia's second Reformasi President, Abdurrahman Wahid, and the

National Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Nasional, PAN), the party led by Muhammadiyah figure Amien Rais.

2 Between June 1998 (when ILO Convention No. 87 was ratified) and the middle of May 1999 there were only 23 articles included on union formation in the *Problema* newspaper clipping series. Most of these dealt with the split in FSPSI. The four 'labour' parties which qualified for the 7 June election also failed to raise the media profile of labour. In the same *Problema* collections, the labour parties were the subject of only eight articles.

3 Having used the word *mensupervisi* (to supervise), he corrected himself, saying "not supervision, really, consultation" (*bukan supervisi sebetulnya, konsultasi*). Cognates of the word 'supervision' emerged frequently in my second period of fieldwork, along with more familiar words such as *membimbing* (to guide).

4 A number of other activists singled out Sisbikum in their criticisms of NGOs that wanted to continue to dominate the labour movement. Recall also that the Sisbikum-sponsored trade union, GSBI, cut all ties with the NGO in late 2001 because its leaders felt that Sisbikum was too controlling.

5 Several other activists also explicitly adopted this position (NGO Interview AH, 26 February 2000; NGO Interview AN, 12 January 2000; NGO Interview BL, 7 March 2000).

Conclusion

1 For an overview of early theoretical developments, see the survey compiled by Mark Perlman (1960: 343–4).

2 For an account of the shift from the "traditional concerns" of labour studies to the "broader processes of proletarianisation" in the Asian context, see Southall (1988).

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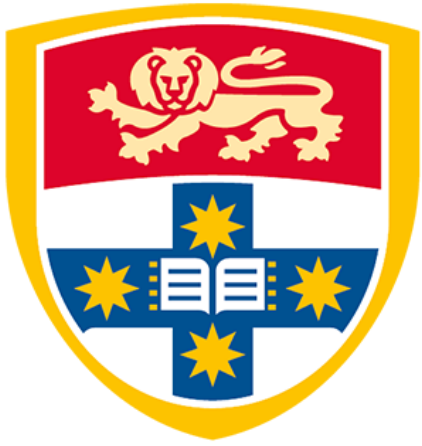

THE UNIVERSITY OF
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After decades of repression, Indonesia's independent labour movement re-emerged in the 1990s led by the NGO activists and students who organised industrial workers and spoke on their behalf. Worker-led trade unions returned to centre stage in 1998 when Suharto's authoritarian regime crumbled and labour NGO activists and their organisations continued to play an influential — and often controversial — part in the reconstruction of the labour movement.

Workers and Intellectuals explores how middle-class activists struggled to define their place in a movement shaped by more than a century of fierce debate about the role of non-worker intellectuals. Drawing on extensive interviews, this book documents the resurgence of labour activism and explains how activists and workers perceived the position of NGOs in relation to workers and trade unions. This fine-grained study of labour organising in a developing country speaks simultaneously to local and global questions and is important for scholars of labour history, politics and sociology as well as specialists working on Indonesia.

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